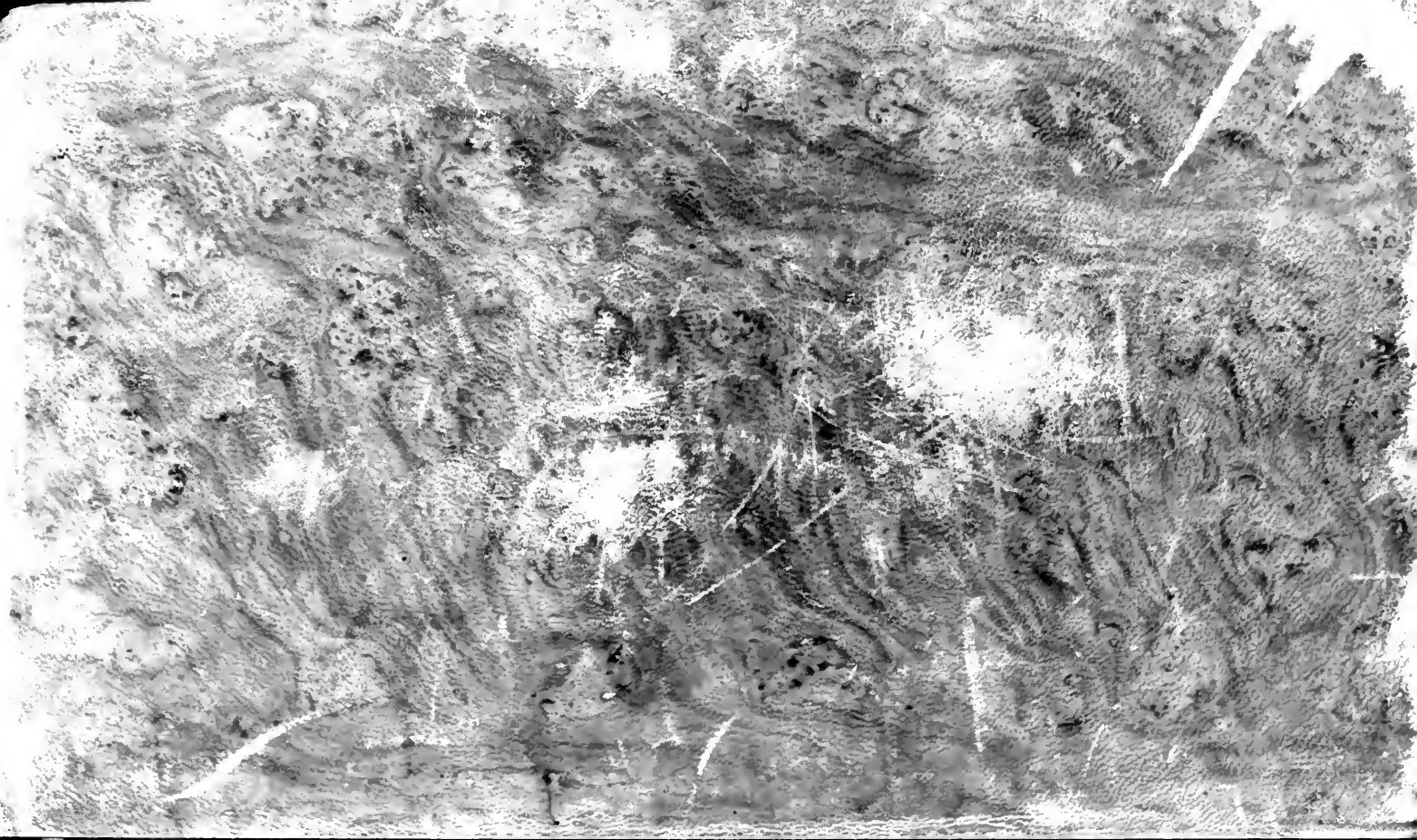

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SERMONS,

BY

SAMUEL STANHOPE SMITH, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW-JERSEY.

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PREFACE.

THE following diſcourſes I commit to the public with diffidence. There is no ſpecies of compoſition which it is more difficult to execute well, ſo as, at once, to edify and pleaſe—to give the grace of novelty to old and trite truths—and to add the decent and lawful embelliſhments of art to the ſimplicity of the goſpel. Stile is ſo much an object of cultivation, in the preſent age, that the moſt ſerious and intereſting truths are no longer well received, unleſs conveyed in an agreeable manner. I have endeavored, in this reſpect, to conſult the public taſte, without ſacrificing to it, however, the plainneſs and gravity of evan-

gelic truth. As far as I have been able, I have ſtudied to unite the ſimplicity that becomes the pulpit, along with a portion of that elegance that is now ſo loudly demanded in every kind of writing. The ſubjects of diſcourſe I have ſelected with as much variety as poſſible, and have endeavored to adapt to them a correſpondent variety of ſtile.

The French preachers, who flouriſhed at the cloſe of the laſt, and the commencement of the preſent century, I have, from an early period of life, admired for a certain fervor in their ſacred eloquence, which the Engliſh, too frequently, want. This manner I aimed, in ſome degree, to transfuſe into my own. And altho, in preparing theſe diſcourſes for the preſs, and conſequently for the cloſet, where the mind is uſually in a cool and diſpaſſionate ſtate, I have abated ſomewhat of the warmth which I endeavored to ſupport in the delivery, yet, in the greater part of

them, this character will ſtill be perceivable.

It is almoſt impoſſible, in the preſent period of ſociety, and of the progreſs of letters, to treat on any ſubject in morals or religion that has not been illuſtrated, in ſome point of view, by ſome eminent writer. Altho every writer and ſpeaker, if he has any talents, will be diſtinguiſhed by a peculiar manner of thought and expreſſion, which will give variety and novelty to a ſubject in *his* hands; yet, there may ſometimes exiſt an unavoidable coincidence of ſentiment between him and others, and, ſometimes, another may have ſo happily hit off an idea that he would not wiſh to change it, becauſe it cannot be changed but with diſadvantage. Where a few inſtances of this kind occur in the following diſcourſes, I have carefully referred to the authors, as far as my memory has ſerved me. For this I have the example of Arch-biſhop Tillotſon, and other diſtinguiſhed writers in the Engliſh language.

In the greater part of theſe diſcourſes I have adopted the ordinary mode of diviſion. In that on *Death*, however, I have followed the idea of the celebrated Arch-biſhop of Cambray in his dialogues on eloquence, in which he recommends to a preacher to take ſome ſingle truth, ſome ſimple principle of religion, as the ſubject of diſcourſe; and, in the illuſtration, to obſerve a real but concealed order, not laid down in diſtinct propoſitions, nor marked by numerical characters. In a warm and pathetic ſtrain of addreſs this ſtructure of a diſcourſe may profitably be choſen; but where inſtruction principally is aimed at, the common practice, by diſtinct and marked diviſions, is, perhaps, to be preferred.

Some readers would have been better pleaſed with profound theological diſcuſſions, and with more copious arguments and illuſtrations drawn from the ſacred ſcriptures. I have choſen, however, to adapt myſelf to a much larger claſs who can hardly be in-

duced to read writings of the kind I have juſt mentioned; and I have endeavored to gain an acceſs to their hearts for the ſolid and ſubſtantial truths of religion by diſplaying them in a manner that, if it does not gratify, will, at leaſt, not offend their taſte. Readers of every claſs will find in them many remarks drawn from the philoſophy of human nature, mingled along with the illuſtrations of divine truth.

Such philoſophical, critical, or hiſtorical references as I thought might wear an air of pedantry if introduced into the text I have thrown into notes. To the learned reader, indeed, they are unneceſſary, and might have been ſpared; but, to thoſe leſs converſant in books, they may not be unentertaining, nor entirely uſeleſs.

The deſign of making this publication did not originate with me. Nothing was more remote from my thoughts at the time it was ſuggeſted and urged by a valued friend from

his partiality, rather than from his judgment. And ſtill, I am far from eſtimating highly its merit, or being ſanguine of its ſucceſs. It will at leaſt enable me to judge whether or not any other work of the ſame kind is likely to be well received.—That it may be uſeful to any portion of my readers, and invite to ſerious reflection ſome who would not have ſought it from another book is my fervent prayer, and almoſt my higheſt hope.

SAMUEL S. SMITH.

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DISCOURSE I.

CAUSES OF INFIDELITY.

PSALMS LIII. 1.

The fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God.

IN the ſacred language, the fool and the ſinner ſignify the ſame perſon. Impiety* is oppoſed to the cleareſt principles of reaſon, and vice makes the ſacrifice of the beſt and higheſt intereſts of human nature. Vicious conduct naturally leads to impiety in principle—and, reciprocally, impiety increaſes the ſtrength of every ſinful propenſity. Irreligious principle, in every degree of it, ſprings out of the corruption of the heart. It is the dictate of its ſinful inclinations, of its guilty wiſhes, of its criminal paſſions,

* Impiety is a term that expreſſes thoſe principles that deny the being, perfections or providence of God, or thoſe actions that moſt directly violate his authority, and the duty and reverence which we owe to him.

which, much more than reaſon, contribute to form the moral ſyſtem and rule of conduct of an unbeliever. Atheiſm, which is its ultimate grade, will uſually be found connected with extreme depravity of manners. Therefore, the ſacred writer ſubjoins to the reflection in the text, "corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity."

The progreſs of infidelity, like that of vice, is gradual. Men at firſt entertain doubts concerning thoſe laws, only, of religion which are moſt directly oppoſed to their favorite pleaſures. By degrees they queſtion every doctrine that impoſes any reſtraint upon their moſt indifferent vices. At laſt, they are emboldened to reject the whole ſyſtem of revelation. When the authority of revealed religion is thrown off, no limits can be aſſigned to incredulity and error. Having no ſtandard of truth, each man's moral ſyſtem will be framed agreeably to his inclinations. And theſe inclinations, according to the common maxims of a vicious philoſophy,* will be erected into laws of nature. God, as the moral govern-

* See introduction to Rouſſeau's Confeſſions.

or of the univerſe, will be excluded from his plan as ſoon as that doctrine becomes inconvenient; and *fate, neceſſity, accident,* I know not what, will be ſubſtituted in his room. Atheiſm is only the laſt link in that chain of impious concluſions that ariſe out of the depravity of the heart. And, indeed, between the rejection of revelation, and abſolute impiety, there is, in the philoſophy of the preſent age, hardly any middle grade. The one and the other reſt upon the ſame principles, and are equally liable to the ſevere cenſure of the ſacred writer—The fool hath ſormed the concluſion *in his heart.* It is the heart that reaſons, and folly decides. In treating of the cauſes of infidelity, which I purpoſe to do in the preſent, and in a future diſcourſe I ſhall take the ſubject in this extent, as queſtioning generally the truth of religion. It is not my intention to enter into any diſcuſſion of the evidences of religion either natural or revealed.—Theſe have often been diſplayed with ſuch clearneſs, and eſtabliſhed with ſuch force of argument by a multitude of excellent writers, that it cannot be proof, but honeſty and candor which men require to make them ſincere and humble converts to the croſs of

Chriſt. Frequently, the beſt refutation of infidelity is to expoſe it to itſelf, and to lay open its real principles and motives. This I purpoſe to do in the following diſcourſes:

In the introduction, permit me to obſerve that this ſubject, never unimportant, is, at the preſent period particularly intereſting, and worthy your moſt ſerious attention. Europe is deluged with a flood of impiety. The corruption of her manners is daily increaſing the extent of the evil. Her philoſophers and wits, her orators and poets, are continually opening wider its ſluices, and adding to it that force and extenſion which genius alone can give to the principles of vice. Our own country, although as yet but in the infancy of its exiſtence, is rapidly imitating the degeneracy of her manners, and, conſequently, the licence of her principles. You ſee the profeſſed diſciples of an impious philoſophy filling many of the moſt reſpectable ſtations in ſociety—You frequently ſee, in the upper claſſes of fortune, an open and undiſguiſed neglect, and even contempt of the inſtitutions of piety—You ſee a profligate generation riſing up, who affect to ſport with every moral tie,

and to treat with levity the moſt ſacred doctrines of religion, and that great depoſitory of truth, the holy ſcriptures. Let us examine the principles upon which they act: to develope them will be to demonſtrate their folly. They may be compriſed under the heads of Vice, of Ignorance, and, of Vanity.*

I. Infidelity, in the firſt place, is commonly founded in vice. Rare is it, indeed, that men commence their courſe of impiety by rational and ſerious doubts concerning the authenticity of the ſacred ſcriptures—that, actuated by an honeſt love of truth, they have profoundly and impartially examined the evidence on which they reſt—and when, on good grounds, they have been convinced that there exiſted no divine law to controul their conduct, and no ſupreme judge to whom they were amenable, have then only indulged in greater licence of manners. On the other hand, do we not almoſt always ſee them begin by relaxation of morals; and, after their taſtes and habits have been vitiated, then, and only then,

* Maſſillon Doutes ſur la Religion.

think of queſtioning truths that controul their propenſities, or condemn their pleaſures.* As long as they preſerved their original ſimplicity of manners, they received with reſpect, the religion of their fathers, and entertained, without ſuſpicion, the ſacred principles inſtilled into them in their education, and ſo ſtrongly recommended by the voice of uncorrupted reaſon. When their manners began to change, they found new queſtions continually riſing in their minds, concerning doctrines which hitherto had appeared ſo reſpectable and holy.—Their doubts kept pace with their vices. As every ſucceſſive indulgence threw down the fences of virtue to a greater extent, they found themſelves tempted, by degrees, to bring in queſtion, every law of religion that oppoſed their inclinations, and at length, by one bold and deciſive effort, to reject the whole.

This is not an unfounded repreſentation, reſting merely on a pious prejudice. It is a matter of experience—and for the truth

* From this remark, may be excepted a few, who ſeem to be governed from the beginning of life, by a peculiar perverſity of natural temper.

of it, I confidently appeal to the experience of thoſe who affect to diſbelieve the goſpel, and to treat it with an unholy levity, if their infidelity did not commence in a purſuit of pleaſure, too free to be reconciled to its pure, humble, and ſelf-denied ſpirit. At firſt, conſcience, not yet perverted by falſe principles, nor rendered callous by the habit of ſinning, would remonſtrate againſt their criminal purſuits. Theſe remonſtrances would be accompanied with reſolutions of amendment; but, finding every reſolution overcome as ſoon as the temptation was renewed, deſpairing, at length, of their own fortitude to conquer, they ſtudied only to juſtify their inclinations.

A man has powerful reaſons for endeavouring to reconcile his opinions with his conduct—if his practice is not ſupported by principle, it lays the foundation of a painful and diſtreſſing conflict in the mind—he is miſerable who, always a ſlave to his paſſions, is, at the ſame time, always overwhelmed by his own ſelf-reproaches—when his paſſions are too ſtrong for his ſentiments and purpoſes of duty; when he finds it difficult to change his habits, and is unwilling

to renounce his pleaſures, he ſoon endeavours to modify his principles according to them. And, unhappily, when a man ſtudies to deceive himſelf, it is always in his own power—it is his heart, not his underſtanding—his wiſhes, not his reaſon, that then decide upon truth.

Another proof that irreligious principles are the fruits of vicious and looſe living, is the ſpirit of the objections, that are uſually made againſt religion.

Are they not pointed againſt thoſe doctrines, chiefly that are moſt directly oppoſed to the criminal inclinations and purſuits of men? The continence and purity required by the goſpel, firſt awaken the enmity of the libertine and profligate, and raiſe in them a wiſh to find it falſe. Its ſobriety and temperance diſpleaſe the diſſolute: its meekneſs, forbearance and humility, offend the proud and reſentful. The ſpirit of retreat, of devotion, and heavenly mindedneſs which it enjoins revolts thoſe whoſe hopes and enjoyments centre only in this world. In a word, the predominant and characteriſtic vice of each ſinner firſt impels him to

ſeek for objections againſt religion. Above all, are not theſe objections urged with the greateſt zeal againſt thoſe doctrines ſo dreadful to the guilty, the final judgment of God, and the eternal retributions of his juſtice? Is it not in order to free their minds of the apprehenſions created by theſe awful truths, that they ſo earneſtly endeavour to ſhake the deepeſt foundations of the chriſtian faith? Theſe ideas give no moleſtation to virtue: they are terrible only to vice, and vice alone is ſolicitous to deſtroy them. Becauſe "the carnal mind is enmity againſt God, and is not ſubject to his law, neither indeed can be," it would endeavour to annihilate both the law and the lawgiver.

While, enſlaved as they are to their luſts, they admit the authority of religion, they are compelled ſecretly to tremble at the ideas of futurity. Their fears are a proof of their crimes. In this caſe, their only reſource for peace of mind is to renounce religion; to perſuade themſelves, that, at death, they ſhall ceaſe to exiſt; and that, hereafter, there will be neither tribunal nor judge. When theſe ideas are eſtabliſh-

ed, conſcience has no more ground for its reproofs; the heart no more cauſe for its fears. To this point, therefore, all their ſtudies are bent, that they may acquire tranquility in the pleaſureable purſuits of vice. Senſual pleaſure is their ſupreme good, and if they can diveſt themſelves of all apprehenſions for the future, into it they plunge, with headlong and brutal appetite.

It is the object of all thoſe writers, who have lately diſtinguiſhed themſelves as enemies of the croſs of Chriſt, to eſtabliſh the licentious idea, that death is an eternal ſleep; that there is no moral governor of the univerſe, no judge to whom we are accountable for our actions. And is it not the object of philoſophy in every nation, and in every age, when morals have become extremely corrupted, to prove that men have the ſame end with the brutes, only that they may abandon themſelves to the ſame appetites?

If religion preſented nothing to their faith but abſtruſe ſpeculations, and incomprehenſible myſteries that had no relation to morals, they would paſs them with the

ſame indifference, that they do the abſtractions of any other ſcience: but it touches the heart, and controuls their luſts—therefore it is, that it awakens in them the keeneſt oppoſition. They profeſs, indeed, to be ſhocked at its myſteries; they find doctrines in it that revolt their reaſon, and on theſe they inceſſantly declaim: but, it is only to conceal from themſelves and from the world, the true grounds of their enmity. It is becauſe religion commands them to renounce this guilty commerce; to ſacrifice this criminal connection; to ſubdue this dominant luſt, and to flee even the motives and temptations to evil, that it excites all rancour of hatred, and all the bitterneſs of hoſtility. Aſhamed to avow theſe diſhonorable cauſes, they endeavour to enliſt reaſon in the ſervice of the paſſions, and pretend to reſt on it an infidelity, that takes its true origin from the heart. It is becauſe religion can make no compromiſe with vice, that it is the object of their abhorrence.—By the rancour of their minds, we may judge of the real ground of their enmity to the law of Chriſt. Hypocriſy and impoſture, are the leaſt crimes which they impute to religion. Their ſarcaſms and ſneers, they are

never tired of reiterating againſt its hiſtories, its doctrines, and its miniſters. They urge them on all occaſions; they repeat them without regard to decency or opportunity. The malignity of their hearts, the irritation of provoked and diſappointed paſſions, continually burſt forth, and diſplay themſelves in the whole manner of their oppoſition to the inſtitutions of piety. Too plain it is, to be denied, that their pretended infidelity, and their declared hoſtility to religion, take their riſe ſolely from their vices.

Another proof that infidelity ſprings from the vices of men is, that, uſually, it keeps pace with their paſſions; it flouriſhes in proſperity—in adverſity it loſes its confidence and effrontery. The tide of pleaſure buoys it up; health, and a vigorous flow of ſpirits, keep far out of view that intereſting period that tries the honeſty and ſolidity of the principles of our conduct. But, let affliction weaken the force of the paſſions—let ſome great and unexpected reverſe of providence wreſt from the proud the power or the wealth in which they truſted, and from the voluptuous the pleaſures which intoxicated

them—let them be reduced to feel the vanity and uncertainty of the world, within the narrow circle of which they had circumſcribed all their happineſs and their hopes—their infidelity begins to totter—their hearts begin to miſgive them—that future world which they had hitherto deſpiſed, and profeſſed to diſbelieve, begins to acquire reality and importance—anxiety and alarm take poſſeſſion of the ſoul, and in the moment of diſtreſs and weakneſs, when they moſt need a ſupport like that of religion, they are left to deſpair. When real danger appears, their pretended principles are not able to ſuſtain them: they find indeed that they had no principles—they were only the deceitful dictates of a ſenſual heart, which they had miſtaken for principles. Why do their opinions vibrate? Infidels in proſperity, believers in extreme adverſity—Why does their boaſted impiety forſake them at a ſeaſon ſo critical? If it were founded on reaſon, it could not change—reaſon is always the ſame. But, reſting only on the paſſions and the vices, it is mutable like them. When the fuel that nouriſhes them is withdrawn, its deluſions and effrontery are both at an end.

Let a ſinner who glories in his fancied ſtrength of mind, becauſe he is not governed by vulgar prejudices and ſuperſtitious fears, approach that ſincere hour when things begin to appear in their true lights, when the world which had deceived him is vaniſhing from his ſight, when he feels himſelf drawing near that eternal exiſtence which now aſſumes an awful reality, and the terrors of divine juſtice impoſe a dreadful neceſſity to be honeſt—ah! at this moment, can he reſt upon his principles? Vain principles! they are ſwept away like light and withered leaves before the riſing ſtorm. Inſtead of that tranquil and affected incredulity with which he formerly diſmiſſed the duties of piety, or ſneered at its remonſtrances, you ſee him agitated by cruel and exceſſive fears. His heart trembles and faints within him, at the proſpect of a judgment to come. Does he any longer cavil at the evidences, or revolt at the incredible doctrines of religion? Does he demand new proofs of it before he will believe? No; he *believes and trembles.* It is not its evidences, but its comforts, which he requires. You hear him intreat for thoſe holy offices which once he deſpiſed. He calls for thoſe miniſters

of God who formerly were the objects of his neglect, perhaps of his fooliſh ſcorn. It is not now the queſtion with him, if there be a God? If there be a future ſtate of retribution? Theſe truths ruſh with fearful evidence upon his ſoul; but, with the trembling jailor, "what ſhall I do to be ſaved?" He preſſes the verge of an eternal exiſtence—the paſt preſents nothing but ſubjects of gloomy and ſelf-condemning reflection—the future offers nothing but a fearful and overwhelming deſpair. If a ray of hope ſtrikes upon his mind, through the awful darkneſs that ſurrounds him, it is derived only from that deſpiſed religion, to which, too late perhaps, he now flees for refuge. Oh! 'tis an honeſt hour that tries to the bottom, the foundations of infidelity. How few can then ſtand the ſevere ſcrutiny of conſcience, or bear the teſt of their own reaſon when diſentangled from thoſe objects that uſed to deceive it? Not one, perhaps, of all that witling tribe, who inſult or cavil at a religion, which they have never examined. When the props on which his impiety had reſted, are torn from beneath the ſinner, by the unrelenting hand of death, the wretched fabric

tumbles on his guilty head, and cruſhes him beneath the ruins.

Is this repreſentation drawn too high? Penitent Rocheſter! I appeal to the tears and confeſſions of thy laſt moments.* Was not this the language of thy deſpair, ferocious Blount! whom thy miſeries compelled to be thy own executioner?† And Shafteſbury! gay and mirthful Shafteſbury! ſo apprehenſive wert thou of the impotence of thy philoſophy, to ſupport thee in this great conflict, that thou haſt forewarned thy friends not to receive as genuine, any ſentiments on religion, which thou mighteſt utter, in the weakneſs of nature, during her laſt ſtruggles. Thou haſt, by anticipation, abjured a confeſſion thou waſt afraid the honeſty of death might extort from thee?‡

* The noted Earl of Rocheſter, the hiſtory of whoſe libertiniſm and penitence, has been written by Biſhop Burnet.

† The author of the *Oracles of Reaſon*, who, at laſt, becoming gloomy and melancholy, in a fit of deſpair, put an end to his own life.

‡ Anthony Aſhley Cooper, Earl of Shafteſbury, equally celebrated for his wit and his infidelity. He was ſo ſucceſsful in the uſe of delicate irony, that he endeavoured to eſtabliſh it as a principle, that ridicule is the proper teſt of truth. From the example of many other infidels, he was

Such examples demonſtrate that many, even of thoſe who arrogate to themſelves the diſtinction of being philoſophic infidels, have not acted in life under the full conviction of their own principles. A ſecret doubt ſtill lurked at the bottom of their hearts, which the light of eternity, as they approached towards it, has diſcloſed to view. And, does not almoſt every libertine, in the intervals of his paſſions, after the intoxication of pleaſure is off the mind, find his conſcience miſgive him when, in a cool and ſerious hour, he looks forward to the end of life?

This is a new proof that the principles of infidelity, which he ſports in the moments of levity, and on which he ſometimes affects to reaſon, are not embraced with candor and ſincerity—they are the offspring of the paſſions, and that only during the ſeaſon of proſperity—affliction, which ſtrips the enchantment from vice, ſhakes the confidence

apprehenſive, leſt the fears of death might ſhake the firmneſs of his philoſophy, and draw from him ſome declaration favorable to religion. He requeſts his friends, if he ſhould make any ſuch declaration, to aſcribe it to the weakneſs of nature, and to take his real ſentiments from his writings.

which the mind had repoſed in them. The ſerious proſpect of eternity overwhelms them with deſpair.

Such is the opprobrious origin of infidelity. It continually ſpeaks to us, indeed, of the ſuperior illumination of reaſon; but it ſprings out of the very boſom of darkneſs. It boaſts of a ſtrength of mind ſuperior to other men; but it ſhews us only the weakneſs of a corrupted heart, a ſlave to the moſt diſgraceful luſts. Ah! this vaunted ſtrength is nothing but the boldneſs and intoxication of vice, that will ſhortly be converted into abject fear, and that now often trembles in ſecret at its own daring. Frequently, indeed, the moſt confident appearances of impiety are united with real and diſquieting apprehenſions of the truth of religion. The profligate endeavors to eſcape from his own reflections, by plunging into ſucceſſive ſcenes of diſſipation. An oſtentatious diſplay of impiety, an exceſſive levity on the ſubject of religion, is intended merely to cover from the world, or to ſtifle in his own breaſt, the apprehenſions that diſturb his peace. He derives a kind of perſuaſion in favor of falſhood by frequently repeating it. If the

principles of his education ſometimes recur with force; if the fears of futurity, at certain moments, diſquiet him; he ſtudies to repreſs them, and to fortify his heart againſt itſelf, by venting, in a bold and indecent ſtile, the maxims of impiety. His ſcoffs, his ſneers, his profane declamations againſt religion, are they any proof of the real and ſettled conviction of his mind? Far from it. His mind is weak and timid; and he ſtrives only to ſupport his courage by playing the infidel. He is a coward who endeavours to allay, or conceal his apprehenſions by an overacted bravery—He reſembles a fooliſh child who ſings in the dark to chaſe away his own fears.*

Every view which we have taken of the ſubject, tends to confirm the truth which I propoſed to illuſtrate, that one, and, perhaps, the principal cauſe of that infidelity, real or pretended, that infects the circles of faſhionable diſſipation, and has plunged ſo many profligate youth in the depths of impiety, is to be found in the growing vice and licentiouſneſs of the public manners. "The fool hath ſaid in his heart there is no God—

* Maſſillon.

Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity."

A few philoſophic infidels, perhaps, in whom a taſte for ſtudy and ſcience may have corrected the groſſer diſorders of the paſſions, will feel themſelves little affected by the general ſtrain of the obſervations hitherto made. Yet is it true, notwithſtanding, that the ground of their oppoſition to the goſpel, is an inward and ſtrong averſion to the purity and holineſs of its precepts. They cannot ſubmit their hearts to the yoke of the Redeemer; therefore, they endeavour to break and caſt it off. But I have chiefly in view that numerous tribe who have never even ſuperficially examined the principles of chriſtianity—who have adopted the cant rather than the philoſophy of impiety—and who continually ſport its principles as a juſtification of their irregularities. Unhappy men! who are tearing away, with pernicious zeal, every remaining tie that yet impoſes any check upon your career to ruin; for one moment ſeriouſly conſider your ſtate—pauſe in your courſe, and look forward to its end. If there is a God, with what aggravated terror will you at laſt meet

this judge whom you had not expected? If the goſpel is true, what, O miſerable ſouls! muſt be your fearful deſtiny? Can your impious levity change the eternal nature of right and wrong, or, by making you forget, ſuſpend the puniſhment of your crimes? Can your denial, or your oblivion of your creator, impede the ſure and awful courſe of his juſtice?

If infidelity is condemned by the diſgraceful principle from which it ſprings, it is not leſs condemned by its unhappy conſequences. That horrible doctrine that removes God from the univerſe, preſents nothing to the rational view but a boundleſs waſte of death—of inevitable ſufferings during a few moments of exiſtence, followed by the hideous proſpect of eternal annihilation. If the ſyſtem of nature is not arrang d and governed by a wiſe and gracious providence; if we do not exiſt by the power, and under the protection of a merciful and almighty parent; if there is no happineſs but by accident, and the tranſient poſſeſſion of it muſt only augment the pain of being ſpeedily torn from it forever; if miſery is urged upon us by the laws of a fatal neceſſity, and

there is no remedy for extreme ſuffering; if in this life only we have hope, and all beyond is a fearful gulph of everlaſting oblivion; then exiſtence is a curſe, this world is a dreary priſon, the good man may ſit down in deſpair, and weep over his own being; or, like the ſons of guilty pleaſure, he may renounce his uſeleſs virtue, and ſay, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!"

The certain tendency of principles of irreligion is to increaſe the immorality and licenſe from which they ſpring. Whatever weakens the obligations of piety, tends to diſſolve both the ties of virtue, and the reſtraints of vice. Convenience and power become the only rule of juſtice—inclination and opportunity the only limit of voluptuouſneſs. Relaxation of morals marches in the front, libertiniſm follows in the train of infidelity.—How cautious ought youth to be even of liſtening to principles ſo flattering to the paſſions, but ſo dangerous to the ſoul! Shun, as the moſt ruinous enemies, thoſe falſe friends who endeavour to inſinuate into you the fatal poiſon. Suſpect the gay and faſcinating forms of plea-

ſure under which they preſent vice to your choice—for, in the end, "it biteth like a ſerpent, and ſtingeth like an adder."

Theſe principles appear in their moſt pernicious and deteſtable form when they invade, as, in ſome inſtances, even in this young country they have done, that ſex whoſe peculiar glory is modeſty and chaſtity. Religion ſhould always find an aſylum in the female breaſt. It is the higheſt embelliſhment, and it is the greateſt ſecurity of their characteriſtic virtues. When their religious ſentiments begin to be corrupted, ſociety is on the verge of diſſolution—licentiouſneſs then is under no reſtraint. But, while their hearts preſerve the ſacred depoſit of religion, entruſted to them in their early education, they impoſe the moſt effectual check upon libertiniſm of manners.—To their piety, the public morals will owe the moſt eſſential obligations. Deteſt, therefore, and ſhun the man who would ever attempt to ſeduce your heart, by betraying your underſtanding. The principles of irreligion can never be inſinuated to you but with the baſeſt deſigns. Pleaſure is the decoy of vice, and the advocate of im-

piety. Whenever ſhe offers her enticements, ſuſpect ſome latent danger. She is a Syren whoſe ſong lures unwary voyagers into the midſt of gulphs that ſwallow them up, and amongſt rocks that daſh them to pieces. Shut your ears againſt her enchantments—cloſe your hearts againſt her deſtructive charms. Religion is your ſafeguard and your ornament—it is the ſureſt baſis both of your honor and your happineſs.

Permit me, in the concluſion, to addreſs a ſerious admonition to thoſe young perſons who, wiſhing for greater licenſe, are beginning to pronounce, though with a feeble and heſitating tone, the language of infidelity. You are, as yet, little aware of the fatal iſſue to which you are tending. When once you begin to diſplay your doubts, or your wit on the ſubject of religion, or to ſeek for arguments to relax its ties, the progreſs is commonly rapid towards the point of abſolute impiety. Every criminal indulgence becomes a new argument with the heart, againſt the law of Chriſt which condemns it. By embracing the principles of infidelity, you are ſeeking for a peace of conſcience in the purſuits of vice which

they can never yield. The great and fundamental truths of religion are too deeply implanted in human nature to be eaſily eradicated. And, while they remain, they muſt diſquiet the tranquility of the ſinner. You may deny the exiſtence of a righteous Deity—in your heart you may wiſh there were none—you may ſecretly ſay to yourſelf, in the moment of temptation, *there is no God;* but, ſtill the ſentiment of his fear remains—the bodings of his juſtice follow your crimes—ah! theſe bodings are the deep, infallible dictates of nature: they are ſure preſages, to the impenitent, of an awful retribution. Arreſt, then, your ſtep, if you are yet only entering on the threſhold of impiety. Seek, while you may, the precious refuge of religion, that will, ere long, be denied to the hardened ſinner. In the hour of affliction you will find in its deſpiſed inſtitutions, in its doctrines, and its hopes, your only conſolation. But if you deny your Creator—if you perſiſt to reject *the Lord who bought you*, to whom, or to what, will you have recourſe in your extremity? —When the cold hand of death is preſſing upon you—when you are trembling before the king of terrors, oh! with what dreadful

importunity will you be conſtrained to implore the mercy of that God whom you have denied! will you call for the aids of that religion which you have inſulted! Good God! the terror of looking into the grave under a fearful uncertainty about our eternal being; or, under the more fearful apprehenſions of eternal miſery! Unthinking youth! who are ſporting with ſubjects of ſuch infinite moment, or aſking with a ſneer, for the reaſons on which religion commands your faith, and your obedience —look on the death-bed of an unbeliever, and ſee the reaſons! There is an object in which you may contemplate the value of religion, and the falſehood of thoſe impious principles on which you are hazarding your ſalvation. See the trembling, the expiring, the deſparing mortal! His terrors ſpeak to you with the evidence of demonſtration, and declare the exiſtence of a holy and righteous judge of the univerſe. His language, and his looks proclaim the reality of the dreadful retribution he is going to receive. The remorſe which diſtracts him, ſhould preach the goſpel to you with the moſt perſuaſive eloquence. Ah! impiety of living is a dreadful preparative for a

dying bed. Fatal indeed is his folly who *ſays in his heart there is no God*, till that moment of irremediable terror and diſmay when he ſees him already dreſſed and ſeated for judgment. "Behold, now is the accepted time—behold, now is the day of ſalvation!" "Turn ye, therefore, to the ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope!"

DISCOURSE II.

CAUSES OF INFIDELITY.

PSALMS LIII. 1.

The fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God.

THE reflection of the ſacred writer in this paſſage relates immediately to that deſperate atheiſm which denies the exiſtence of an infinite and eternal Spirit, the maker and the judge of men; or, to that oblivion of God which ſeizes ſinners in the ordinary train of life, and leaves their paſſions and their vices without reſtraint. I have extended the idea ſo as to embrace the principles of infidelity univerſally, inaſmuch as they are all effects proceeding from the ſame cauſe. The character of the fool may well be applied, not only to thoſe cool and ſpeculative unbelievers who have eſtabliſhed to themſelves ſyſtems of impiety from the abuſe and perverſion of reaſon, but to thoſe

light and ignorant pretenders to infidelity who have only adopted from others certain licentious maxims which they have not been able to connect with their principles or their conſequences; or, whoſe powers reach no farther than to indulge a perpetual vein of rude wit, and indecent pleaſantry on the ſubject of religion. In a diſcourſe of this nature, adapted to general inſtruction, perſons of this character will perhaps merit our principal attention—becauſe ſober and rational infidels are rarely to be met with, while impudent and ignorant men are every where to be found.

In treating of the principles of infidelity, and expoſing their criminality and folly, I have avoided entering into any conſideration of the excellence of the goſpel, or of the evidence on which it reſts. I have confined my attention to unfold thoſe guilty and diſgraceful cauſes that uſually combine their influence to render men enemies to religion. Theſe I have endeavoured to comprehend under the heads of vice, of ignorance, and of vanity—Vice that creates in the heart an inveterate enmity to the law of God, and puts an unjuſt bias on the mind

in judging of divine truth—Ignorance that has never ſeriouſly and impartially examined the ſubject—And Vanity that aſſumes a falſe and frivolous honor to itſelf for thinking differently from the bulk of mankind.

The firſt of theſe cauſes I have already illuſtrated. I proceed to obſerve, that

II. Ignorance is a frequent ſource of theſe irreligious principles, and diſcourſes that every where produce ſo much evil in ſociety. An ignorance as criminal, as it is diſgraceful—that ſprings as much from the corruption of the heart which is unwilling to ſee the truth, as from the defect of the underſtanding which has never ſincerely examined it.

I have not in view at preſent a few philoſophic infidels whoſe memory the annals of literature have preſerved, and who, by wiſdom, knew not God—who have left the fame of their genius, with their pernicious writings to infect poſterity—but, who have left alſo their errors, and contradictions to be added to the innumerable proofs which

every age has furniſhed of the weakneſs and uncertainty of human reaſon on all ſubjects of divine and moral ſcience, when not illuminated by the ſpirit of God. Theſe ingenious enemies of the goſpel, however, have been men of wit rather than of profound talents. Their prejudices have led them to examine the queſtion of its truth on one ſide only. They have been willing to ſee nothing but preſumptions againſt religion. Diſtinguiſhed more by the powers of the imagination than by thoſe of the underſtanding, you find them, where they ought to be moſt ſerious and grave, indulging a perpetual vein of ridicule and wit. The moſt philoſophic of modern infidels has confeſſed that his metaphiſical ſubtleties are not calculated to produce a clear and ſettled conviction of their truth in the mind.* The inaccuracy of Voltaire in hiſtory and antiquities, ſo neceſſary to juſt ex-

* Mr. Hume, after endeavouring, with great ingenuity, to annihilate both the material and the ſpiritual world, as they are uſually underſtood, and to eſtabliſh the principle that nothing exiſts in the univerſe but various and ſucceſſive trains of ideas, acknowledges that, although he could find no reaſons ſufficiently ſolid to overthrow what he had advanced, yet, he could not act upon his own concluſions, nor, at all times, yield them a clear and unwavering aſſent.

amination of the authenticity of religion, is almoſt proverbial. Theſe ſubjects he conſidered as hardly worthy the attention of an author whoſe fame depended ſolely on his wit.†—But, ſeparated from his faults, what is he, or the moſt famous patrons of an infidel philoſophy, compared with the Newtons, the Boyles, the Clarkes, the Warburtons, the Lockes, the Fenelons, the Rollins, the Paſcals, and all that endleſs liſt of great names, diſtinguiſhed equally for genius and for piety, who have appeared as the friends of religion, and have brought the moſt profound and illuſtrious talents as a voluntary offering to the foot of the croſs.

But theſe diſcourſes have chiefly in view a claſs of men very different from the ſpe-

† Thomas Paine, in that book of his entitled *The Age of Reaſon*, infinitely exceeds Mr. Voltaire in hiſtorical and critical inaccuracy. He has a certain ſprightlineſs of manner and boldneſs of aſſertion which diſtinguiſh him; but ſo totally defective is he in point of erudition, that in no other country but this, where there is much ſuperficial reading, but little ſolid and extenſive learning, could his work have obtained any currency. Thoſe parts of it which have any appearance of reaſoning he has borrowed almoſt wholly from Mr. Boulanger. For the reſt, it is made up of the half-remembered ideas of his childhood, of indigeſted criticiſms picked up in a looſe reading, and of the moſt palpable violations of hiſtorical truth.

culative and ingenious unbelivers who have juſt been named—a claſs to be met with in moſt fashionable circles, and, every where, among the ſmatterers in knowledge, who are merely the apes of the former. I mean thoſe men of pleaſure, who are enemies to religion, becauſe religion is an enemy to their vices—who never have examined the luminous and reſpectable evidence on which the goſpel reſts—who ſpeak with confidence of what they do not know, and blaſpheme what they do not underſtand —the delight of the frivolous and vain, the oracles of the ignorant—who retail among their companions objections againſt religion with which they have been furniſhed by a looſe and deſultory reading, or which have paſſed from mouth to mouth among the libertine and profligate till they have become vulgar and ſtale. A great preacher* has happily called them the *echoes* of infidelity, who juſt repeat the blaſphemies which they have heard from others—The mere organs of impiety who ſerve to convey its traditions from one race to another.

* Maſſillon.

To attack doctrines that have ſtood the teſt of ſo many ages—that have been illuſtrated by the greateſt writers with the moſt luminous evidence, and eſtabliſhed on the moſt ſolid foundations—that have counted among their ſubmiſſive diſciples men of the moſt illuſtrious characters, and the moſt profound learning who have eſteemed their obedience to the faith their chief glory—doctrines that have commanded the homage of the wiſeſt as well as the moſt powerful of mankind, would require uncommon genius and erudition, deep reflection, and extenſive reſearch. Is this the character of thoſe forward and conceited youth who preach infidelity in the circles of their libertine companions—who declaim with pertneſs on the credulity of the vulgar, and the craft of the prieſthood—who are ever ready to jeſt on the ſubject of religion, and aim, by an impious effrontery, at a reputation for wit which nothing but the ignorance of their hearers can aſcribe to them? No, they are men of ſuperficial talents, too much devoted to their pleaſures to think. It would be doing them too much honor to ſtile them Theiſts, or Atheiſts, or, indeed, to call them by any name that implies a

ſyſtem of principles. Their limited knowledge is ſufficient only to embarraſs their minds with difficulties on the ſubject of religion, not to furniſh their ſolution--to create doubts not to afford certainty.

Their doubts are accompanied with a diſhoneſty of mind that does not wiſh to have them reſolved. They form a convenient protection for their vices, which every approach to the truth ſerves to diſquiet and fill with apprehenſions. *They hate the light; neither come they to the light, leſt their deeds ſhould be reproved.* Far from ſeeking for real and ſolid information, which, if they were ſincere, they could not fail to obtain on a ſubject enlightened by the labours of ſo many pious and excellent writers, their only ſtudy is to ſhun conviction.

One knows not, at ſome times, whether moſt to pity, or be amuſed at men of this deſcription when they affect to repreſent religion as a pious prejudice, and to reproach the credulity of the believing multitude. Is there no credulity, are there no prejudices attached to impiety? Alas! can any prejudices be ſo ſtrong as thoſe

formed by the paſſions againſt the truth? as thoſe with which vice combats religion? Can any credulity be more abſurd and weak than that which is often diſplayed by the enemies of religion when their aim is to depreciate the character of a good man, or when they think they have found a tale that will militate againſt the ſacred hiſtory? Nor is this confined alone to thoſe pert, illiterate *fools* who excite your contempt, while they provoke your honeſt indignation —this diſgraceful blot ſtains the reputation of writers of the greateſt name who have enliſted themſelves among the champions of impiety.* The fables of nurſes and of children are not more ridiculous than the narrations that have been gravely made, and the fictions that have been aſſumed by philoſophers to contradict the Moſaic ſyſtem of the world, and of the origin of man.†

* Iſaac Voſſius, the famous grammarian, was ſo remarkable for his credulity and his infidelity, that king Charles once wittily ſaid of him, "There is nothing you cannot make that man believe except his Bible."

† In lord Kaims' *Sketches of Man*, and lord Monboddo on *The origin of Languages*, may be ſeen ſome very extraordinary relations of ignorant travellers, and ſome moſt abſurd fictions adopted in order to diſcredit the Moſaic account of the primitive ſtate of human nature, and the unity of the human race. Becauſe Moſes has informed us that the world, at

And the moſt celebrated wit of modern times,* if he can, by ranging through antiquity, find one fable more improbable than another, its certain recommendation, and title to belief, is its inconſiſtency with the hiſtory of the bible.

firſt, was a chaotic maſs covered with water, Monſieur Bailly, that he may recede from him as far as poſſible, has ſuppoſed, in his letters to Voltaire, that it was originally a ball of fire ſtruck off from the ſun by the impulſe of a comet, and that it has, in an almoſt infinite ſucceſſion of ages, been gradually cooling, and becoming a fit habitation for man, and that the firſt habitable ſpots were at the poles. If this had been a tenet of religion, how would ſuch a philoſopher as Monſieur Bailly have received it?

* Mr. Voltaire, you find in him every where the moſt incongruous relations, and the moſt palpable contradictions on the ſubject of religion. See *letters addreſſed to him by certain Jews* for many examples of this kind. To the liſt of credulous or fanciful writers Mr. Volney may very fairly be added, if indeed he believed his own fictions, and did not rather value himſelf on making the moſt extravagant ſuppoſitions, only that he might make a great diſplay of learning in ſupporting them. This author, eſtimable as an hiſtorian, immediately becomes viſionary as an anti-religioniſt. This charge will be fully eſtabliſhed in the mind of every candid and judicious reader who ſhall examine his attempt to prove the chriſtian religion to be nothing more than a corrupted worſhip of the ſun—and that the hiſtory of the innocence and fall of man, of the woman, the temptation, the ſerpent, and the curſe, is only an aſtronomical hieroglyphic of the Egyptian prieſts to ſignify ſpring, ſummer, autumn, and winter, and the conſtellations that preſide over theſe ſeaſons. See his *Ruins of Palmyra*—If chriſtianity were obliged to have recourſe to ſuch incredible ſuppoſitions to ſupport the hiſtory of the ſcriptures, what a triumph would it afford to unbelievers!

Chriſtians are reproached for receiving their religion by inheritance, and embracing their faith on the ground only of authority. How juſtly may the charge of ſhameful dependence on authority be retorted on the crowd of unbelievers who never examine for themſelves the foundations of religion, but, wiſhing only to find it falſe, and not able to rely on their own judgment, agree to pay homage to the wit and underſtanding of a few enemies to the croſs of Chriſt whoſe talents they admire, and make them alone the oracles of their faith. Perhaps, without talents, they have nothing to recommend them but a ſprightly libertiniſm, and a confident manner. Perhaps they do not really believe the principles which vauntingly they profeſs—Poſſibly, their own hearts miſgive them while they utter their blaſphemies; but, covered with an impoſing air, they deceive and ſeduce the ignorant who look for example only to juſtify their unbelief, and, like the timid and the feeble, draw all their courage from the confidence of others. Such are the apoſtles and prophets of impiety! and ſuch their weak and implicit diſciples!

Admitting that the great body of believers derive their faith from education, who, I pray you, merits the reproach of the moſt diſhonorable credulity? He who ſuffers his religious principles to be influenced by the opinions of his country—by the inſtructions of parents ſolicitous for his virtue and happineſs—by the venerable authority of ages—by the example of the beſt and wiſeſt men in every age—by the gravity and ſacredneſs of the church the faithful depoſitary and guardian of piety and morals? Or he who adopts his opinions from libertines and debauchees—from the idle, the diſſolute, and the vain—from men, perhaps equally ignorant, but, only, poſſeſſing more effrontery than himſelf?—Alas! how often does the corruption of principle, as well as of manners, which is the diſgrace of ſo many youth of the preſent age, ſpring merely from the force of vicious example on the weak and ignorant—from immoral maxims, from ridiculous anecdotes, from looſe ſentiments ſported without thought, in a moment of levity, by men diſtinguiſhed for no talent, except an impoſing vivacity, and of no ſcience except what they have picked up in the ſchool of libertiniſm? Ah! if falſe ſcience

has deſtroyed her thouſands, ignorance has deſtroyed her tens of thouſands—An ignorance that is increaſing more and more in proportion as luxury and diſſipation degenerate our manners, and check the progreſs of ſolid and uſeful improvement.

This character, ſo diſgraceful as well as criminal, ought to repreſs that idle and contemptible

III. Vanity which I have ſtated, in the laſt place, as another cauſe of that ambitious infidelity that no longer retires from ſight, but boldly obtrudes its deformity and crimes on the public view.

Vanity! Can man be vain of degrading his nature, and ſinking it to the level of the brutes that periſh—of quenching that celeſtial ſpark which the Creator hath enkindled in his boſom—of effacing from the mind the glorious and conſolatory idea of God—of deſtroying the eternal ſource of order and beauty in the univerſe—of extinguiſhing the ſublime and bleſſed hope of immortality—of digging for himſelf the fearful grave of everlaſting oblivion? Yes;

we ſee the monſtrous ſpirit of infidelity aſſume a deplorable honor to itſelf from cauſes that ſhould expel it with horror from ſociety, and forever cover it with diſgrace in the opinion of the virtuous and wiſe.

1. Vanity prompts ſome conceited and injudicious youth to make a diſplay of impious principles, becauſe they are ſuppoſed to carry with them a genteel air. Pleaſure being almoſt the univerſal purſuit, the principles that afford it a protection, and ſcreen it from the reproaches of reaſon, and the cenſure of conſcience, meet, in all circles, too favorable an attention. That man is aſſured of being well received, who can inſinuate ideas of looſe pleaſure with ingenuity, and make their apology with ſprightlineſs. And, ſo depravid have manners become, that he who aims to be a faſhionable man, too often finds it contribute to his ſucceſs, in the circles of wealth and idleneſs, to mingle his converſation with a ſeaſoning of impiety. When faſhion has ſo far miſplaced its approbation, a crowd of weak young men, ambitous to diſplay their parts, go even beyond what faſhion requires. In order to provoke the laughter, and attract

the admiration of the thoughtleſs and the diſſolute they dare indecently to triſſle with whatever is moſt venerable and holy, and to violate the moſt ſacred myſteries with a profane tongue. Deceived by the pleaſantry which they excite where they ought to meet with nothing but indignation or contempt, they miſconſtrue petulance into wit, and hold themſelves to be men of talents when they are only impudent men.

2. Their vanity is apt to aſſume a merit to itſelf for thinking differently from the reſt of mankind. In an age in which manners are not yet totally depraved, the maſs of the people reſpect religion. The ſentiments of piety are written by the hand of nature at the bottom of the human heart, and nothing but extreme vice, or the pride, and the falſe refinements of ſpeculation can efface them. Inſtitutions which the world venerates, theſe men claim a miſerable glory from deſpiſing. What is common has, with them, an air of vulgarity; and, in the eſteem of *fools*, they ſhew a ſuperiority of underſtanding while they inſult the opinions of their country, and the world. Weak minds are apt to imagine that they recommend

their ſpirit, and their courage by ſpurning at the fears which influence other men. The awful conſiderations of a future judgment and future retribution, they affect to repreſent as imaginary terrors. And, frequently, a good man muſt ſee with pity the ſelf-complacent vanity with which ignorant and petulant young men regard their own wiſdom and fortitude for having delivered themſelves from all the impreſſions of a pious education, and torn off the ſhackles of religious fear. Alas! what a reverſe of abject fear, and of horrible deſpair ſhall overwhelm them, when the ſupreme judge ſhall come to awaken them from this vain dream—when he ſhall unſettle all their falſe and criminal principles by the ſtroke of affliction—when he ſhall diſmay them by the terrors of his juſtice—when the abyſs of eternity, opening upon their view, diſcloſes thoſe dreadful realities which, in the days of their folly, they had deſpiſed; and ſhews beneath them no ſupport from the promiſes of divine grace, or the hopes of a better life!

3. Another claim to be vain they found on the fancied reſemblance which they bear

to certain men of diſtinguiſhed genius who have unhappily proſtituted their talents to the ſervice of impiety and vice. By quoting names which ſcience hath conſecrated, they hope to attach themſelves to their glory, and to derive an honor from thinking like them. That there have been unbelievers of penetrating minds, and poliſhed wit, I am not diſpoſed to deny—nor can it be denied on the other hand, that men deſtitute both of wit and penetration are continually affecting a vain reputation from being able only to retail their maxims. Hume! Rouſſeau! how many vain conceited youth have you contributed to deſtroy! Your writings* ſtill continue to diffuſe a baneful poiſon through ſociety! Oh! fatal talents! that have produced ſo many ambitious imitators aſpiring to reſemble you, but who can reſemble you in nothing but your crimes!

Such are the motives that commonly incline men to the ſide of infidelity. In pro-

* Thoſe writings that were immediately directed againſt the intereſts of piety, and the foundations of revealed religion. For the reſt, they are always ingenious, and Hume, in particular, generally uſeful.

portion as a man is virtuous, chaſte, temperate, modeſt, profoundly affected with the diſplays of divine intelligence and goodneſs in the ſtructure of the univerſe, and penetrated with the dutiful ſentiments that become a creature, to the Creator, and that are ſo honorable to human nature, will he be diſpoſed to embrace the principles, and to become the friend of religion—But, if he is ignorant, vain, lewd, intemperate, profligate—here is a prepared ſoil ready to receive the ſeeds of impiety. Ah! are theſe the grounds on which unbelievers boaſt the ſtrength of their minds? Are they grounds that will ſupport the ſolid fabric of truth?

Theſe diſcourſes I ſhall now conclude with a few reflections addreſſed to young perſons, and eſpecially, to the ſtudious youth in this aſſembly.

In this precious and critical period of life your habits, and your principles are both to be formed. Theſe have ſuch a reciprocal connexion and influence, that, if you ſuffer yourſelves to be ſeduced by pleaſure, you are in hazard of plunging into impiety. Urged by the ardor of paſſions that are juſt

beginning to unfold themfelves—flattered by hope which, as yet, has feldom difappointed you—expofed to the example, and the folicitations of the thoughtlefs and the diffipated—and without experience to caution or direct you, you are encompaffed with dangers, not the leaft of which is that of adopting falfe maxims of conduct, and falfe principles on the fubject of religion. You are in danger from companions, and you are in danger from books.—The propenfities of your age expofe you to companions who, in the purfuit of pleafure, have caft of the fear, and almoft the remembrance of God. You will fee realized among them all thofe caufes to which I have afcribed the prevalence of impious principles. But, while you fee them, you are in hazard of being infected by them. Powerful is the contagion of vicious fympathy; and the ardent inclinations to pleafure, the limited knowledge, the unripened prudence of youth, often expofe them as an eafy prey to *feducers* who *lie in wait to deceive.* Avoid thofe dangerous companions who *make a mock of fin;* and, above all, thofe who not only *fay in their heart there is no God,* but, who are vain of their folly, and proclaim

their impiety with a brazen front. Theſe adminiſter to young minds the moſt fatal poiſon—more dangerous than contagion and the peſtilence, they draw after them a mighty train of ruin. Beginning only with apologies for your propenſities, they ſtop not till they have whelmed you in the dreadful gulph of impiety.

You are in danger from books. Thoſe writers are firſt apt to catch the youthful attention, that pleaſe by a certain brilliancy and wit, that agitate the heart, and taint the imagination. Thoſe eſpecially ſeem to be ſought after, at the preſent period, with peculiar zeal, that attempt to ſhake the foundations of religion, and, by removing the idea of God, and of his holy inſpection and government from the univerſe, relax the ties of moral obligation, and give an unreſtrained licence to the paſſions. In your choice of books let ſolidity and truth be their principal recommendation. Theſe will always be found favourable to ſincere piety, and to good morals. Check that forward preſumption, ſo natural to youth, of early thinking that you are wiſe. No quality can be more an enemy to virtue,

and to every ſubſtantial and uſeful improvement; or more certainly lead to vice and inſignificance of character.—Let it be your firſt and ſupreme concern to examine the truth, and underſtand the excellence of revealed religion. I am far from requiring you to be implicit believers. Religion has nothing to fear from the moſt faithful and rigorous ſcrutiny. It ſuffers only from partial and ſuperficial inquiries. Enter into this inveſtigation with an honeſt love of truth, and with a ſincere determination to embrace, and to obey it, wherever it may be found, and however ſelf-denying may be the duties it preſcribes. Ruinous and fatal will be the errors into which you will fall, if, on this momentous ſubject, you content yourſelves with a haſty ſurvey, or, only ſeek for evidence againſt the goſpel, and in favour of your paſſions.

What can concern you ſo highly as to know if you are immortal beings, or, if you have no higher hope than to mingle again with the clods of the earth in eternal ſilence —If God *is juſt to take vengeance on ſin*—or, if *all things come alike to all men*, and there ſhall, at laſt, be no difference between the

righteous and the wicked—If there is a Saviour who *taketh away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf;* or, if, according to the holy ſcriptures, the impenitent ſinner muſt ſink down to everlaſting deſpair covered with all the horrors of unexpiated guilt? All other inquiries ſhould be poſtponed to theſe. They regard not only your preſent peace, but your eternal intereſts—Not the *honor that cometh from men,* but that which *cometh from God.*

Let not any of you imagine that, becauſe you may not chuſe the holy miniſtry for your profeſſion in future life, the truth or the practice of religion may be of leſs importance to you than to others. This is prefering decency of character to the diſcharge of your duty. Beſides, although true piety may be leſs eſſential to one *profeſſion* than to another; yet, remember, and may the ſpirit of truth write it indelibly in your hearts, it is equally neceſſary to you all as you are *men*—as you are immortal—as you are accountable to God—as you are to receive your everlaſting deſtiny from his juſtice according to the deeds you have done in the body.—But, abſtracting from

the conſiderations of a future exiſtence, religion will form your higheſt ornament, and your moſt reſpectable character, in whatever ſtation you may be placed in life. The reputation of ſincere religion is fitted to attract confidence and honor from mankind —What a luſtre does virtue ſhed upon conſpicuous talents! How amiable will fortune, or rank, or whatever may elevate you hereafter above your fellow-citizens, appear, if it be adorned with that piety which makes all men equal again by the benevolence and humility of its ſpirit! "Godlineſs is profitable to all things, having the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

This ſubject I have choſen, not from any apprehenſion that the cenſures which are due to impiety and vice are merited by you; but from my knowledge of the preſent ſtate of manners, and the preſent faſhions of opinion. In proportion as our manners daily degenerate, irreligion in principle more and more prevails. All moral and religious opinions, except thoſe that are fixed by revelation, are in a ſtate of perpetual flux and mutability. They have their

faſhions and paſs away. This is the age of infidel and licentious principles in their moſt extravagant ſhapes; and the age to come will look back with aſtoniſhment at the folly and madneſs of the preſent. Will you riſk your ſalvation on a foundation ſo unſound and falſe? Conſider the awful intereſts that depend on the deciſion which you form on the ſubject of religion. Examine into its reality, and the right which it claims to command your obedience, with all the ſerioufneſs which eternity requires. It is a high claim that comes to you in the name of God, and in the name of your own immortal intereſts. *The fool* alone *ſays in his heart there is no God* to obſerve his conduct, and to puniſh his vices, and denies a truth that is borne with ſuch evidence on the whole face of nature, and written in ſuch legible characters on the whole courſe of providence. For this crime doth the judge of all the earth, at this moment, ſeem to be puniſhing the world, and, at the ſame time, hardening their hearts that they ſhould not diſcern the cauſe of their calamities.—Eternal Spirit of Truth! rebuke the nations in mercy! Deſtroy the dark ſpirit of atheiſm the offspring and the nurſe of crimes!

Illuminate! penetrate our hearts with the ſacred principles of piety and virtue! Reveal in our hearts *Chriſt Jeſus the hope of glory!* And haſten the bleſſed moment when thy victorious grace ſhall ſubdue the vices, the errors, and the paſſions of all men; and *righteouſneſs ſhall cover the earth as the waters cover the ſea!*

AMEN!

DISCOURSE III.

ON THE DANGERS OF PLEASURE.

ECCLESIASTES VII. 2.

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.

SENSUAL pleasures are among the most dangerous enemies of virtue. The natural tastes for them are not culpable, and, within moderate limits, happiness demands them, and reason and religion permit them. But, ardent, and prone to excess, they require to be subjected to a prudent and holy vigilance, and to be indulged with caution and circumspection.—Constant pleasure is not to be expected here. And the continual or excessive pursuit of it, is unbecoming our state in this world. Our path is chequered with evil. If the sanguine but short-sighted hopes of youth picture to themselves

nothing but flowers in their progress, they will soon be pierced with its thorns. If we look round us, we will see misfortune, pain, and death impressing their melancholy stamp on all the best enjoyments of human life. This vale of tears, after a short and uncertain course, leads to the grave, in which we, and all our fellow-travellers shall be successively swallowed up. It is then the part of wisdom, seriously to consider our state, and frequently to look forward, and be prepared for the solemn and interesting close of the present scene. Much pleasure is unfriendly to serious reflection. It dissipates the heart. It engages it in frivolous pursuits, and too often sinks it, at last, in low and criminal enjoyments. Solid wisdom is best drawn from the sober and thoughtful scenes of the house of mourning: for there we learn to make the most just estimate of ourselves and of the world.

The *house of mourning*, and the *house of feasting* are figurative expressions perfectly in the eastern style designed, the former, to signify those afflictions that call for the sympathy and commiseration of the humane and good; the latter, all high plea-

ſures of the ſenſual kind, eſpecially, if they are accompanied with ſcenes of feſtivity.

The manner in which the ſacred writer ſtates the compariſon between them, ſtrongly ſuggeſts the dangerous influence of pleaſure. For, however gloomy and painful, eſpecially to the young and gay, the objects may be that are preſented in the houſe of mourning, better it is according to him to make the ſacrifices which we muſt make in converſing with them, and learning the grave and uſeful leſſons which are taught there, than to expoſe the frailty of youthful virtue to the ſtrong temptations of the houſe of feaſting. This is the obſervation which I purpoſe to illuſtrate and preſs in the following diſcourſe. For although the text recommends alſo familiarity with thoſe mournful ſcenes that call forth the humane ſympathies of the heart, and invite reflection on the vanity of the world; yet it equally conveys the inſtruction which I have ſtated. And I have choſen to conſider it chiefly in this light, becauſe we every where ſee pleaſure acting upon the young with fatal power, and bearing them irreſiſtibly down its impetuous ſtream.

It is an instruction that deserves from you the higher consideration, because it comes from one who could have no interest to represent religion in a gloomy light—who was not a disappointed misanthrope railing at pleasures which he could no longer taste, nor an austere recluse condemning from his cell enjoyments which he had never known. He was a man acquainted with the world, and by no means averse from pleasure. He had even pursued it to those extremes against which he knew so well to caution other youth: and, when he wrote, was in possession of that power which gave him unlimited command of it in every form that inclination or fancy might demand. Yet this is the author who cautions you against its dangers—for, it weakens that watchfulness and guard which a wise and good man will find it necessary always to maintain over himself—it lays the heart open to too strong temptations—it tends to impair the sentiments of piety towards God—it is unfriendly to the exercise of the benevolent affections—it enfeebles the principle of self-government—and lastly, it is unfavourable to those serious reflections on our mortal condition, and the instability of

human things, ſo uſeful to prepare the ſoul for her future exiſtence, and her immortal deſtination.

I. Much indulgence in pleaſure tends, in the firſt place, to weaken that watchfulneſs and guard which a wiſe and good man will find it neceſſary always to maintain over the frailty of the heart.

The heart, which is the principle of all that is good or ill in man, requires the moſt perſevering vigilance to guard it againſt the acceſs of temptation. A habit of profound and ſerious reflection on ourſelves, and on the real ſtate and duties of life is neceſſary to impoſe a conſtant rein upon the paſſions, and to correct the illuſions by which fancy is always ready to aid the errors of the heart. The ſcenes of delight prepared in the houſe of of feaſting are little calculated for theſe ends. Reflection would mar enjoyments that depend upon the levity and riot of the ſpirits. Pleaſure ſeldom admits wiſdom of her party. The wand of truth which ſhe carries would deſtroy all thoſe unreal images, and airy viſions with which the deluded voluptuary is ſurrounded.

There the heart is thrown loose from restraint, and laid open to the lively and warm impression of every seducing idea. Gaity circulates from breast to breast, and dissipation is held to be necessary to enjoyment. The senses, the fancy, the passions, all heated and inflamed, hurry it away, deprived almost of the power of resistance. "Keep the heart with all diligence, says the wise moralist, for, out of it are the issues of life." And a good man will find it incumbent on him, in partaking even of the most moderate pleasures, to exert an unceasing self-command, and to preserve a mind always collected, and awake to the sentiments of duty. His emotions he should observe as they begin to rise, he should attentively remark their progress, and be prepared to repress their first tendencies to transgress the temperate and lawful bound prescribed to them by reason, and religion. Examine then on what side you are weakest and, most accessible to evil—there fix your principal guard. When the heart is guarded, temptation will assail it in vain. But, when lulled to security by the soothings of pleasure, or transported beyond itself by the vivacity of its feelings, or by the bright-

ſineſs of amuſement, it is ever liable to be ſurprized and overcome. This intermiſſion of vigilance and care is the more dangerous becauſe ſo ſeldom regarded as a fault. Men abandon themſelves without ſuſpicion to the ſweet neglect, and, through the unguarded avenues enter a multitude of enemies who were only lying in wait for this deciſive moment.

Theſe dangers affect even lawful and temperate indulgences in pleaſure. I ſpeak not here of thoſe who make the houſe of feaſting a ſcene of riot—who deſignedly renounce reflection—who ſit down to fulneſs and intoxication, and who riſe to lewdneſs and diſorder. On ſuch inſtruction would be loſt. To them diſſolute pleaſure has done more than break down the fences of the heart, it has deſtroyed the heart itſelf. On the other hand, I ſpeak to thoſe who enter the houſe of feaſting with the moſt innocent intentions—who are not yet prepared to make war upon piety and decency; but, who are not ſufficiently acquainted with the frailty of the heart, and the force of the paſſions. Them I would warn of ſnares that they do not ſuſpect, and of dan-

gers that may furprife them before they are aware.

II. Pleafure not only impairs the guard which a wife man fhould conftantly maintain over his heart, but often lays it open to too ftrong temptations.

Temptation, always dangerous to the imperfect virtue of man, is peculiarly fo in the houfe of feafting. There the fenfes, and the paffions become excited, and furround their objects with a feductive colouring. The glow of imagination raifes a fpecies of inchantment around the votary of pleafure, and his paffions are growing every moment more impetuous and ungovernable.

A good man, who would preferve the purity of his mind, fhould, as far as is poffible for human prudence, avoid thofe fcenes where temptation acquires unufual force; or if, fometimes called to enter them, it becomes him to fummon to his aid reafon, experience, and all the power of pious fentiment, to prevent the firft incautious wandering of the heart and fancy, and to keep

them clearly within that dubious limit that ſeparates vice from virtue. Approaching this critical point, they often kindle with a ſudden and unexpected ardor, and hurry him beyond the moderation which he intended to obſerve. One imprudent indulgence invites another—The gates of the citadel are thrown open, and in ruſh an hoſt of enemies. Of this David affords us an inſtructive and affecting example. And we ſtill read with ſympathy, and commiſeration for his deep affliction, the hiſtory of that pious and amiable prince whoſe latter days were filled with bitterneſs and tears for having only once incautiouſly courted a temptation, and once indulged a pleaſure, to which he was ſtrongly invited by the proſperity of his fortune.

How much more certainly will pleaſure corrupt thoſe who enter its purlieus without circumſpection, and expoſe themſelves to all the dangerous force of thoſe temptations that meet the young and unwary in the houſe of feaſting? Here example, ſympathy of feeling, the arts of ſeduction, all the allurements of ingenuity, all the decorations that wit can give to vice, unite their influ-

ence to betray the heart. Here it is that youth so often lay aside their early simplicity and modesty, and turn apostates from virtue. Do you behold a profligate young man? Ask, where was he first corrupted? It was probably in the midst of the pleasures and amusements of the house of feasting. Where did his passions first kindle with a new, and unknown ardor, and his heart form the loose purpose? Was it not in the house of feasting where temptation invited, where appetite impelled, and where the licentious strain of conversation encouraged his wish? Where did he first hear those principles defended that favour the disorders of the passions, and remove from them all the restraints of religion? Where did he learn at length to sport them himself, while, perhaps, his heart yet smote him for his impiety, and falsehood? Was it not in the house of feasting whence dissipation had banished wisdom and prudence? where the sons of folly were ambitious of shining by an impious and impertinent wit, and sought admiration from one another by the most frivolous qualities? Where, at last, did principles become totally perverted, and no longer impose any curb upon the licen-

tionfneſs of manners? Was it not in the midſt of thoſe ſcenes of groſs pleaſure where the mind, inveloped in the miſts of paſſion, ſees falſhood as truth—where reaſon, bribed by the heart, defends the innocence of every indulgence—and where the example of others contributes to render it confident in error? Ah! temptation acquires a dangerous, and often a fatal power in the houſe of feaſting—It lurks in all the avenues that lead to it. Youth, who incautiouſly expoſe themſelves to its ſnares, or yield to its impreſſions, are haſtening to ruin.

On the other hand, does not wiſdom require that we ſhould occaſionally enter into the houſe of mourning, and grow familiar there with thoſe ſerious and thoughtful ſcenes that preſent to us inſtructive leſſons on the vanity of the world? There every object contributes to abate the immoderate ardor of the paſſions, and to diveſt the allurements to vice of their falſe charms. There we behold all that attracted ambition, or that nouriſhed pride levelled to the duſt. Blaſted perhaps are the objects of unlawful deſire—and the deſires themſelves ſeem, for the moment to be extinguiſhed.

Silent the impious tongue that, profaned religion, and that jeſted with eternity. Gone to her account that ſpirit that, in life, may have forgotten her eternal deſtination, and fought only a vain and momentary happineſs among the deceitful and fugitive joys of ſenſe. O my ſoul! is this the end of all the gilded proſpects of vice and folly! If temptation is ever too ſtrong for thee, turn to the houſe of mourning, and the views that are there preſented will correct it.

III. Scenes of pleaſure and indulgence tend, in the next place, to impair the ſentiments of piety.

The ſolemnity of the ideas, and the purity of the ſentiments which form the ſpirit of true devotion, ill accord with the light fantaſtic joys of the houſe of feaſting, or with the diſſipations of a ſenſual heart. Not only do theſe ſcenes tend to impair or to ſet aſide the holy offices of religion, but frequently we ſee them diſturb the whole order and economy of life? The regularity of families is deranged—The rational and uſeful diſtribution of time is neglected—

Every moment is left to be employed as accident, or caprice may prompt—Hardly any portion remains for the purpoſes of improvement, or for fulfilling the grave and important duties that belong to us as reaſonable men, and as chriſtians—See theſe giddy children of folly haſtening continually from pleaſure to pleaſure. Hardly are they recovered from the fatigues of one till they are again engroſſed in preparations for the next ſcene, as if theſe were the great concerns of life. As frivolous and idle as their employments is the whole ſtrain of their converſation—Ah! in the midſt of ſo many vanities, where are the thoughts of God our Maker?

A continual ſucceſſion of pleaſures is apt to efface from the mind that ſentiment of dependence upon the Creator ſo becoming our ſtate. The proud, ungrateful heart of man receives the bleſſings of divine providence without recognizing their author. He gredily devours them, and then forgets, or ſpurns the hand that beſtows them. Affliction is the ſchool of thankfulneſs as well as of wiſdom. The mind, humbled by ſuffering, enjoys the ſmalleſt mercy with

gratitude; while the richeſt, by proud unthinking proſperity, is firſt abuſed, and then forgotten. If misfortune has not yet touched you, go and contemplate it in the lot of others. There contemplate the frailty of human nature, and the imperfection of all human enjoyments ſeparated from religion. Realize the neceſſity of making God your friend when the world forſakes you. Men nurſed in pleaſure feel not the ſame motives which the weary and afflicted feel to ſeek a refuge in the boſom of the Father of mercies from the ſtorms that vex the world. In the houſe of mourning we naturally lift our hearts to God as the friend of the wretched. We ſee how bleſſed his portion is whoſe chief good remains unimpaired amidſt the wreck of all his other comforts—and who is able to ſay, "I will go to God my exceeding joy. In the time of trouble he will hide me in his pavilion. When my father and my mother forſake me, then the Lord will take me up."* Such pious emotions are not the natural growth of the houſe of feaſting. The heart, ſatisfied with the low and feveriſh enjoyments of ſenſe,

* Pſalms xliii. 4—27. 5, 10.

aſpires not to ſeek more pure and ſpiritual ſources of delight. And amidſt the pride of life, and in the very theatre of vanity, we ſhall look in vain for thoſe elevated and holy affections that ally the ſoul to Heaven, or for thoſe ſentiments of humility that connect a dependent being with the Creator.

IV. High and conſtant pleaſures are unfriendly to the benevolent affections. They tend to contract and harden the heart. The importunities of want, the ſighs of wretchedneſs are unwelcome intruders on the joyous feſtival. How often do the happy thruſt from their doors the children of miſery, or leave them, like Lazarus, forgotten at the gate? On the lowly and diſtreſsful vale of life ſupercilious proſperity is inclined to look down with indifference or contempt. Having gained an elevation to which the clouds never aſcend, it is little moved at the tempeſts that beat on the cottages below. To whom ſhall the miſerable apply for that ſympathy that is neceſſary to relieve their afflictions? Who are they who are diſpoſed to ſeek out the retreats of ſorrow and diſtreſs, and to adminiſter there thoſe conſolations which the afflicted re-

quire? Are they thoſe who have been nurſed in the lap of indulgence and pleaſure? Are they not thoſe who have themſelves been educated in the ſchool of misfortune, and who have been taught, by their own feelings, the claims of ſuffering humanity? Are they not thoſe who often turn aſide from the proſperous courſe which providence permits them to hold through life, to viſit the receptacles of human wretchedneſs, and to carry comfort into the habitations of penury and diſeaſe? Who learn here to feel what is due to human nature?

Pleaſure is ſelfiſh—attracting every thing into its own center, it looſens the bonds of ſociety. Hence it is that luxury haſtens the ruin of nations in proportion as it makes the love of pleaſure the reigning character of their manners. Man is rendered ſocial by his wants and ſufferings. The mixture of evil in the condition of human life, contributes to unite the world by the moſt tender and powerful ties. Mankind are linked together, and endeared to one another by the mutual need and exerciſe of kindneſs. Perhaps a condition mixed with affliction like the preſent, and ſuch a diſci-

pline of ſympathy as we experience in this world, is neceſſary to cultivate the ſoul to that high pitch of benevolence, and to prepare it for thoſe exalted unions that ſhall take place in the celeſtial ſtate. Seldom will callous proſperity, that has never known a change, deign to ſhed a tear over the calamities of the unfortunate, and even when prompted by vanity, or urged by ſhame, it extends a hand to relieve them, it is beneficent without charity. If we would cultivate the benevolent affections, and bring to perfection thoſe humane and generous ſympathies which ſo well become our nature, and are ſo neceſſary and ſo ornamental to our ſtate, we muſt not dwell frequently or long in the houſe of feaſting.

V. Its pleaſures tend, in the next place, to enfeeble the principle of ſelf-government.

Self-denial is neceſſary to ſelf-command. If our deſires are not frequently checked, and always kept within the bounds of moderation, they become, like children ſpoiled by exceſſive indulgence, impatient of controul, and prone to every criminal and

dangerous licence. Thoſe who wiſely educate youth, accuſtom them early to reſtraint, and to ſubmit implicitly to the reaſon and the will of thoſe whom age and experience entitle to govern, that, when their own reaſon comes to take the command, they may be able to obey the reſtraints which prudence and wiſdom will find it neceſſary to impoſe upon their paſſions and their conduct. Such is the purpoſe alſo of that corrective diſcipline, by which it pleaſes divine providence to prepare imperfect men, who are here but in the childhood of their exiſtence, for the ſtate of perfect reaſon, and of perfect virtue in the heavens. In the midſt of moderate enjoyments, and corrected appetites, the ſentiments of duty have opportunity firmly to root themſelves, and to acquire aſcendency among the other principles of the heart. Unreſtrained indulgence corrupts them. And the paſſions, growing inflamed and ungovernable, hurry away their weak captives over all the fences of prudence as well as of piety.

Moderation and ſelf-denial are not leſs neceſſary to the true enjoyment of pleaſure than to the proper government of ourſelves.

When pleaſure is the ſole object of purſuit, its enjoyments ſoon grow inſipid by exceſs. The appetites precipitate themſelves upon indulgence, and weary themſelves with delight. Hence their gratification is often daſhed with diſguſt, and often followed by remorſe. Abſtinence is neceſſary to reſtore the tone of nature, and to create the higheſt reliſh even of the pleaſures of ſenſe. When uſeful employment makes up the main buſineſs of life, thoſe moderate and lawful enjoyments that are interpoſed to unbend the ſpring of the mind, are taſted with the pureſt and moſt exquiſite ſatisfaction. And if occaſionally we retire to the houſe of mourning, its affecting ſcenes are calculated to nouriſh that tenderneſs and ſenſibility of heart which is the happieſt ſoil in which to plant all the moral, ſentimental, and ſocial pleaſures.

An important quality in the government of ourſelves, is the power of firmneſs and conſtancy of mind in enduring the neceſſary evils of life. Youth, who have always been flattered and ſoftened by pleaſure, who have had every deſire gratified as ſoon as it aroſe, who have hardly known what

diſappointment is, are little prepared to encounter thoſe adverſe events of Providence, which ſooner or later muſt preſent themſelves to every traveller through this mournful and uncertain pilgrimage.—However ſerene and pleaſant the morning of life may commence, clouds will often overcaſt the day, or will moſt certainly cover the evening with darkneſs and gloom. If your path now winds along a ſmiling plain in the midſt of flowers, it will ſoon lead you into a barren deſert filled with briars and thorns, or preſent to you frightful precipices from which you will hardly eſcape. Diſappointments you muſt meet, mortifications you muſt endure, diſtreſsful reverſes you ought to expect. What affliction are they preparing for themſelves who now will dwell only in the houſe of feaſting? Conſtant pleaſure induces a weakneſs of mind that augments the preſſure of the multiplied and unavoidable calamities that belong to our ſtate. In that caſe, unlooked for reverſes will overwhelm you with a dreadful weight—if you would act your part with dignity in the world, and not weakly ſink under its misfortunes, accuſtom yourſelf to look forward to its

changes, and ſeriouſly to conſider the mixed condition of human life. Early learn to forego your own inclinations, when duty requires it; and to preſerve them at all times, under the perfect controul of reaſon. Often enter into the houſe of mourning, and there meditate on the dark ſcenes of human nature. Viſit the receptacles of poverty and want—attend the couches of diſeaſe and pain—liſten to the ſighs of the friendleſs and the wretched—look on the melancholy trophies of death—let the cries of mourners who lament the loſs of all that was dear to them on earth touch your ſympathy—reflect on the tears that are ſhed in ſecret, and on the thouſand nameleſs griefs that wring the hearts of the unhappy. By ſcenes like theſe chaſten yourſelves, and, by becoming familiar with affliction, prepare your mind with fortitude to meet thoſe changes which may be reſerved for you in the courſe of divine providence. If it ſhould pleaſe God to cultivate your patience and conſtancy in the ſchool of ſuffering, regard it as a proof of his paternal care. Every ſuch trial will be diſarming for you the force of thoſe great calamities that ſink feeble minds to the duſt, and preparing you, with calm-

neſs and reſignation, to approach the cloſe of life, a period ſo formidable to the ſoft and guilty ſons of pleaſure.—The grace of God, ſanctifying the heart, and cultivating within it the hope of a bleſſed immortality, is the only effectual preparative for a peaceful and happy death. But the holy ſpirit uſes as valuable and neceſſary auxiliaries of his influences, the affecting meditations, and the ſelf-denying duties which I have here recommended. Certain it is that thoſe who form to themſelves the moſt flattering proſpects in the houſe of feaſting, and cheriſh only thoſe gay hopes that are apt to brighten upon them there, muſt, in the progreſs of life, meet with many cruel and overwhelming diſappointments which they will, by no means, be prepared to endure.

Without a firm and ſteady ſelf-command, and many ſelf-denials, no great attainments can be made in the beſt and moſt valuable qualities of human nature. When pleaſure is left to form the character it ſoon deſtroys whatever is amiable or reſpectable in youth. See a young man who has purſued only faſhionable amuſements! What frivolity,

what ignorance, what conceit, what inanity mark his character, and render him contemptible in the eſteem of the wiſe and good! What an unfurniſhed mind! what uſeleſs talents! what an inſipid and unſteady heart! But if he has plunged deep in the ſtream of pleaſure, frivolity and unſteadineſs ſoon become its lighteſt faults. Loaded with treachery, deceit, and every baſeneſs, it haſtens to ſink into the dregs of vice. If the bloom and vivacity of youth ſhould caſt a veil over theſe defects for a time, what inſignificance, what contempt are they preparing for age!—what melancholy and gloom for declining health, and impotent years!—what bitter, and, at the ſame time, what vain repentance for a dying bed!

VI. Pleaſure is unfavourable, in the laſt place, to thoſe ſerious reflections on our mortality, and on the inſtability of all human things which are ſo uſeful to prepare the ſoul for her immortal deſtination.

The image of death would frown on the gaieties of the houſe of feaſting, and daſh them with unſeaſonable melancholy.—

Strangely importunate, and unmindful of propriety would he be thought to be who should insinuate a thought of dying where all were devoted to festivity and mirth. Ah! that solemn and eventful moment is hastening on. The riot of the spirits may hide it from your view, but cannot retard it. And, with a fearful surprize it will overtake those who have not expected its approach.

Little more welcome will the thoughts even of the felicities of Heaven find among such scenes of levity and folly. With these, their pure and holy nature cannot be associated. And the heart that adores the one will be cold and indifferent to the other. We are connected with this world by the impressions of sense, and with the world to come only by the power of reflection. Hence, in the house of feasting, where the senses are all heated and inflamed and reflection almost excluded, the present obtains an infinite advantage over the future. Eternity is forgotten, and the grave at last opens upon us by surprize. As death is the inevitable lot of human nature, and all things here are hastening to a period, how wise would it be often to retire from the circle

of amuſement, and to grow familiar with theſe ſerious truths in the houſe of mourning. There we may learn to meet our own change in peace, and be prepared to paſs with hope to the great tribunal. There we may cultivate that lively faith in the merciful Redeemer of the world, that will ſhed light and joy on the valley of the ſhadow of death, and wholly remove thoſe ignoble and impious fears of dying that diſcompoſe the latter end of ſinners. There we may contemplate the vain, the tranſitory, and uncertain nature of earthly things that are unworthy to attach our hearts. It is only when we recollect that we are united to this world by a momentary tie, and to the world to come by eternal relations, that we ſhall deſpiſe, as reaſonable beings ought to do, the fantaſtic occupations of the diſſipated and the idle, and cultivate the ſolid and immortal hopes of piety. Theſe are leſſons not taught in the houſe of feaſting. There man ſeems to poſſeſs a power of happineſs independent and ſecure—the viciſſitudes, and the period of life, are hidden behind the miſts in which ſenſual pleaſures involve the reaſon. He is lured on ſtep by ſtep, in a fatal oblivion of eternity till the dreadful

moment when he is called all unprepared to plunge into it.

The whole object of the preſent diſcourſe is to teach us caution and moderation in indulging the pleaſures of ſenſe. Univerſally criminal they are not—On this ſubject the Creator has indicated his will by the powers of enjoyment with which we are endued, and the objects, evidently deſigned to gratify them, with which we are ſurrounded. But, liable to great abuſe through the infirmity and corruption of human nature, they require to be reſtrained by a firm and conſtant rein. There is a moderate bound within which they are lawful. Chearfulneſs is a virtue—though levity is a vice—Amuſement, enjoyed as a relaxation from the grave and important duties of life, is to be allowed—diſſipation, as an enemy to all good principle, is to be condemned. Temperate pleaſures may be rendered favourable not only to the enjoyments, but the duties of life—inordinate indulgence leads to the proſtration of every generous and noble affection of the heart. The bleſſings of providence, taſted with moderation and received with thankfulneſs,

ſerve to ſtrengthen the principle of piety—abuſed to intemperance, they corrupt, and at length, deſtroy both body and ſoul.

Life is a ſerious thing. It is the commencement of an endleſs being. It is the only period of our probation for immortality. Every action here is impreſſing ſome character upon our deſtiny. And the whole ſeries of our conduct in time is to form the ſubject of one vaſt reckoning at the bar of God. Although the chearfulneſs of conſcious innocence, and the ſerenity of pious hope become a good man, levity is unſuitable to his ſtate. And frequent entrance into the light and thoughtleſs ſcenes of the houſe of feaſting, even in youth, is unworthy a rational and immortal being who is encompaſſed with ſuch ſerious proſpects, and has duties of ſuch high importance to fulfil. With reſerve, therefore, indulge pleaſure. Never ſacrifice to it one duty either to God, or to man. Preſerve, in your lawful amuſements, a collected mind, habitually attentive to the great deſtinations of life. Chaſten your joy, knowing that, for every idle word, and for every idle thought, you muſt render an account.

Remember the presence of God, and join trembling with your mirth.—Look forward to that period, not far remote, when *the sun, the moon, or the stars shall no longer shine* on your tabernacle—when *the silver cord* of life *shall be loosed, and the golden bowl shall be broken, when the* frail *pitcher shall be broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern—then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.** Meditations

* Eccles. xii. This is a fine collection of images in the eastern stile to express the period of life. *The thread of life* is a familiar image in the poetry of all nations, which is here represented as a *silver cord* for its preciousness and delicacy. The only part of the imagery which will be obscure to an American or European reader is the following—*when the pitcher shall be broken at the fountain, and the wheel shall be broken at the cistern.* In the south of Asia and in Egypt, where there were few streams, water, so necessary for the uses and sustenance of life, was sought for in wells, or collected in cisterns. From hence it was drawn with pitchers or other similar vessels, by young maidens, or the daughters of the family, for domestic uses; or, it was raised by a wheel, and distributed into the troughs and reservoirs at which the herds came to drink.—When the pitcher, that had so often gone and returned safe, was at last broken at the fountain—when the wheel, that raised the flood from the cistern, and threw it along the Channels prepared for the cattle, was destroyed, the waters were no longer collected. These refreshing streams, so necessary to the comfort and sustenance of nature, ceased to flow. These circumstances are employed as figures, simple but beautiful, to express the rupture of that frail vessel that contains the fountain of life; or the cessation

on death do not diſturb the innocent, they alarm only the guilty conſcience—They do not cover life with gloom, and deſtroy its pleaſures, as the licentious imagine—They only render pleaſure temperate and wiſe. Frequently enter into the houſe of mourning—and, always, when it comes in competition with the houſe of feaſting, give the preference to this ſchool of humanity and ſerioufneſs—*for it is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart.*——Theſe ſeaſons of tender and virtuous grief may nouriſh pious reflections, and bring to maturity the hopes and diſpoſitions of heaven, that would have decayed and periſhed amidſt the ardent and barren pleaſures of ſenſe. Happy they who, *by the ſadneſs of the countenance have the heart made better*—who are taught, by the afflictions that are in the world to look far above its tranſitory

of the action of the heart that throws its precious ſtreams along the channels of the veins. Thoſe who conſult the commentators on this paſſage, will find, in the greater part of them, many inſipid and ridiculous criticiſms, as if the ſacred writer, inſtead of employing a beautiful poetical image, intended to give us a pedantic and enigmatical ſyſtem of anatomy.

and unſatisfying joys, to the eternal habitations of the juſt and the throne of the living God, in whoſe *preſence is fullneſs of joy, and at whoſe right hand are pleaſures for ever more.*

AMEN!

DISCOURSE IV.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

LUKE XVI. 19—26.

"THERE was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day—and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus who was laid at his gate full of ſores and deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table—moreover, the dogs come and licked his ſores. And it came to paſs that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's boſom. The rich man alſo died and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and ſeeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his boſom. And he cried and ſaid, father Abraham! have mercy on me, and ſend Lazarus that he may dip the tip

of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham faid, Son! remember that thou, in thy life time, receivedſt thy good things, and likewiſe, Lazarus evil things—but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beſides all this, between us and you there is a great gulph fixed, ſo that they who would paſs from hence to you cannot, neither can they paſs to us who would come from thence."

This parable contains the moral hiſtory of a ſoft and effeminate voluptuary. His attire, his table, and his equipage diſplayed the magnificence, and luxury of a prince. *He was clothed in purple, and fine linnen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day.** But, in the midſt of that ſplendor, and ſelf-enjoyment he ſeems to have forgotten the great end of living. Rendered unmindful of his Creator and of the ſufferings of his fellow creatures, by an abuſe of mercies derived only from

* Purple was the colour appropriated, in that age, to princely rank. And, as the manufacture of linnen was then only in its infancy, it was not introduced as an article of ordinary dreſs. The wearing of *fine linnen* therefore was conſidered as a proof of the greateſt wealth, or the greateſt luxury.

the goodneſs of God, and which ought to have been employed to the purpoſes of piety and charity; he appears to have been intoxicated with his good fortune, and to have ceaſed to reflect on the uncertainty of human things, and the great intereſts of his immortal exiſtence. Thus occupied and diſſipated, in the moment when he leaſt expected, and was leaſt prepared for the dreadful reverſe that followed, he was ſurprized by death, *and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment.* The proſperity of his firſt fortune, and the miſery of his preſent condition are the more ſtrongly marked by being oppoſed to the wretchedneſs, and the triumphs of Lazarus. It is of little importance to inquire whether this is the hiſtory of men who actually lived at Jeruſalem; or, whether our Lord hath borrowed only general and probable characters, and worked them into a parable for our inſtruction. The moral is the ſame--That we are not to judge of the happineſs and miſery of men by any external circumſtances in which they may be placed in the preſent life--That piety, though it may ſeem to be overwhelmed by poverty, by contempt, and ſuffering here, is found, at laſt, to be inſi-

nitely the happieſt choice—That vice, though ſurrounded with ſplendor and affluence, and with all the pleaſures that affluence can purchaſe, will appear, eventually, to be a wretched portion—And that *one thing*, above all others, *is needful*. But, as the character of this ſon of pleaſure is not marked in the parable by any high, and atrocious acts of vice, except the want of charity to Lazarus, and ſympathy, with his affliction, it may be intended farther to teach us that a voluptuous luxury, a ſoft and exceſſive ſelf-indulgence, an ambitious oſtentation in the ornaments of the perſon, the ſumptuouſneſs of buildings and furniture, and the richneſs and ſplendor of equipage, when they employ our principal cares, are themſelves criminal; and, by the neglect which they induce of the higheſt intereſts of the ſoul, are preparing it, in the end, for that fearful deſtiny ſo ſtrongly painted by our Lord in this intereſting parable.

To repreſent this deſtiny, in order, if poſſible, to deter the children of guilty pleaſure from purſuing their fatal career, ſhall be the principal object of the preſent

diſcourſe, as it was, probably, the main deſign of our Lord himſelf.—I ſhall previouſly, however, take a ſhort review of the other, and ſubordinate inſtructions that riſe out of the hiſtory, and that, without doubt, were, likewiſe, in the view of this great teacher.

The firſt leſſon which we are taught by it is, that we are not to judge of the happineſs or miſery of men by any external circumſtances in which they may be placed in the preſent life.

The gaiety and ſplendor that ſurround affluence, and are oſtentatiouſly diſplayed by luxury, often deceive the world into a falſe opinion of the happineſs of the men who enjoy them. The votaries of pleaſure, as long as they can avoid looking into their own hearts, and into futurity, are themſelves deceived on their own ſubject. But, not to mention that true happineſs depends chiefly on the inward ſtate of the mind, and the regulation of its affections by the ſtandard of reaſon, and the ſpirit of religion, ſo contrary to all their habits, let us view their enjoyments in the light only in which they are repreſented to us in this affecting ſtory. If

they muſt ſhortly end in eternal and unutterable miſery, what value ſhould we put upon them? Under the face of gaiety, and the high enjoyment of life, are concealed the principles of eternal death. Under an exterior maſk of felicity on which are painted ſatyrs, and ſyrens, and the images of joyous feſtivals, are covered the ſcorpions of a guilty conſcience, and the avenging furies of divine juſtice.

On the other hand, the pains or the wants which a good man may be obliged to endure in the preſent life, which is but a moment, can take little from the infinite ſum of an eternal felicity on which he is the next moment about to enter. Lazarus may be poor—he may lie at the gate of a princely palace whoſe lord riots in the abundance of his wealth—the dogs may clean the ſores of a wretch who, ſick with hunger and fatigue, is obliged to accept of that ſmall office of kindneſs from beaſts, which he will look for in vain from the unfeeling pride and luxury of his own ſpecies—Lazarus may periſh for want—but his pains are only for an inſtant. Death which ſeems to be the greateſt of them, puts an end to them all.

Angels convey him to everlaſting habitations. And the boſom of the father of the faithful receives him from the contempt and injuries of the world. And, in the eſtimate of our happineſs, what proportion is there between a momentary joy ſucceeded by eternal ſufferings, and a momentary ſuffering ſucceeded by eternal joys?

When we conſider the different deſtinies of theſe two men, how ſtrongly, in the next place, do they inculcate this truth, that *one thing is needful!* Is happineſs the aim of all the purſuits of men? It is to be found only in true religion. Wealth, power, and ſenſual pleaſure, the phantoms that continually occupy and deceive the world, can add little to the felicity of men when meaſured on the great ſcale of immortality.—And if they are acquired by crimes, or are enjoyed without God, their poſſeſſion is vanity, their end is miſery. Look on the dreadful fate of this rich voluptuary and ſay, *What ſhall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, if he loſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* When plunged in that devouring gulph, will it be any conſolation to him

that he has once revelled in the fulnefs of fenfual joy? Will he not envy the ſtate of Lazarus, poor, deſpiſed and wretched, but the heir of heaven? Will he not eſteem it infinitely a better portion to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon?

But, probably, this parable was intended, farther, to repreſent the guilt, and to point out the condemnation of a ſoft and pleaſurable life devoted ſupremely to the gratifications of appetite, and of vanity. The character of this rich man is not marked by any crimes of notorious profligacy. He inhabited a palace, he was attired with ſplendor, he enjoyed a ſumptuous and luxurious table. His fault ſeems to have conſiſted chiefly in an oſtentatious luxury, in an effeminate ſelf-indulgence. And there are innumerable duties to the poor, to the church, to our country, to mankind, as well as to God, with which ſuch a life is inconſiſtent.

By pampering the appetites, and inflaming the paſſions, it is unfriendly to that ſelf-government, and ſelf-denial which are eſ-

ſential to a life of piety and virtue. And not leſs is it unfavourable to the virtues of benevolence and charity. High and continual pleaſures beget a ſelfiſhneſs of mind that, at laſt, ceaſes to feel for the miſerable —They nouriſh a pride that is prone to look down with contempt, or with neglect on the humble and unfortunate—They create a falſe and faſtidious delicacy that is apt to be offended at the view of poverty and wretchedneſs.—Lazarus, therefore, lies neglected at the gate. If he is not inſulted, he is forgotten. It would break in too much upon the enjoyments of this ſon of pleaſure to concern himſelf about the peace of a wretch. If he liſtens to a repreſentation in his behalf, the care of furniſhing relief is devolved on pampered ſlaves, who, partaking of their maſter's fullneſs, have no ſympathy with diſtreſſed and friendleſs virtue. He is too indolent to rouſe himſelf from the lap of eaſe and indulgence to the active cares of a generous and noble charity.—A high crime this in the eye of God who has an equal care of all his children, and who, in the courſe of a wiſe and gracious providence permits the varieties of pleaſure and of pain that exiſt among men

only in order to cultivate in their hearts the nobleſt virtues, and to unite them together by the ſweeteſt ties.

Equally inimical is a continual ſucceſſion of ſenſual delights to the ſublime virtues of public ſpirit. They contract as well as enfeeble the mind. And render it incapable of expanding itſelf to the great and enlarged intereſts of religion, of our country, or of mankind. They concenter it in low and ignoble enjoyments. Innumerable little and ſelfiſh cares perpetually engage, and, at length, almoſt excluſively occupy it. The ſoftneſs and ſelfiſhneſs of pleaſure diſqualify a man for thoſe high and arduous ſervices in promoting the glory of God, and the ſalvation of men, to which a chriſtian may often be called; and render him equally unable, or unwilling, to make thoſe generous and noble ſacrifices which the virtues of humanity, of patriotiſm, or of piety may require. Do we ever expect to hear from the lovers of pleaſure this holy and diſintereſted profeſſion which ſo well becomes a a diſciple of the crucified Redeemer—*doubtleſs I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my*

Lord for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things? Neither count I my life dear unto myſelf, ſo that I might finiſh my courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God? And if we conſider thoſe virtues only which are eſſential to the exiſtence or proſperity of ſociety, can you, in trying ſituations, truſt the integrity, or confide in the patriotiſm of men who, by voluptuouſneſs, have corrupted and enfeebled their minds, or, by luxury, have probably impaired their principles along with their fortune? And when theſe vices have infected the maſs of a nation all improvement ceaſes—public enterprize is extinguiſhed—national defence languiſhes—national honor is betrayed. They have uniformly proved the grave of empires.

But the great evil of this character conſiſts in loving the creature more than the Creator, who alone is worthy of our ſupreme affection. This is the abundant fountain from which flow all other ſins. The love of God is the love of virtue in its ſource and eſſence; and is, therefore, the proper and univerſal principle of duty.

But you see in this unhappy voluptuary, and in those who are daily following his example, a heart devoted to pleasure and vanity, to self-indulgence and pride, in the midst of which God cannot find his proper place. Sensual enjoyments, in the rapid growth of their habits, soon come to occupy the whole man. And the mercies of God, abused by excess, tend only to withdraw the heart from him towards whom they were designed to awaken the liveliest emotions of gratitude, along with the firmest resolutions of duty.

Such are the outlines of a character consigned by Christ to so fearful a punishment. A character highly interesting to the present age in which we see such numbers who are *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.* And that degenerate crowd is daily increasing with the access of wealth, and the dissolution of our manners. It is of the more importance to reveal sinners of this description to themselves, because they are deceived by a face of beauty and propriety around them; and the continual flatteries that wait upon wealth and rank give men a substitute for a good conscience in the opinion of the world,

and confirm the favourable eſtimate which they make of themſelves by the imaginary eſtimates of paraſites, and ſycophants, or of thoſe falſe friends who are attached only to their fortunes. They are not holy indeed, but they are free from the reproach of great vices. Flattered by their dependents, admired or envied by the world, they are at peace with themſelves, and they imagine alſo that they are at peace with God. Ought they not to tremble, when they reflect that this is the character of the only *reprobate* recorded in the goſpel?

Before I exhibit the melancholy and afflicting picture of his ſtate, permit me to obſerve that, though the parable offers directly to our view the condemnation only of indolence and pleaſure, of luxury and pride; yet, indirectly, it teaches us that ſelf-intereſt, and ſelf-indulgence, in every form in which they can be purſued, excluſively of God, ſhall, finally, be doomed to the ſame miſery.—The different claſſes of ſociety are prone to contract and nouriſh prejudices againſt one another. And the poor are apt to hear with ſatisfaction every declamation againſt the vices of the wealthy

and the great, as if they were exempted, by their ſituation, from every reproach that touches them. But whoever purſues, or enjoys the bleſſings of providence without referring them all to God, and acknowledging his goodneſs in their acquiſition and ſubmitting to his will in their application—whoever prefers eaſe to duty, or intereſt to charity—whoever is devoted to his appetites, or purſues beyond the moderate bound of virtue, the pleaſures of ſenſuality, or even of amuſement, in the coarſeſt as well as the moſt refined form—whoever does not mingle a ſpirit of piety and benevolence with all his occupations, and enjoyments—whoever is not active, faithful, and liberal in his efforts to promote the intereſts of religion, the glory of God, and the happineſs of mankind in that ſtation in which providence hath placed him, although he is not clothed in purple and fine linnen, is guilty of the ſame crime, and is heir to the ſame deſtiny with this proud and wealthy ſinner.

That deſtiny I am now to unfold. And, as it is the principal object of the parable, it will therefore require of you the more patient and ſerious attention. But, that I

may not wander into regions of unauthorized fancy and conjecture, and thereby detract from that weight which truth and certainty alone can give to every repreſentation that is made, and every doctrine that is delivered from this place, I ſhall derive the whole of that intereſting view which I am about to take directly from the ſacred text.

"It came to paſs that the poor man died and was carried by angels into Abraham's boſom. The rich man alſo died, and was buried—and, in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and ſeeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his boſom. And he cried and ſaid, Father Abraham! have mercy on me, and ſend Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame! But Abraham ſaid, Son! remember that thou, in thy life time, receiveddſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beſides all this, between us and you there is a great gulph fixed, ſo that they who would paſs from

hence to you cannot, neither can they pafs to us who would come from thence."

In this repreſentation we may remark four ſources of miſery to this wretched ſoul—the remote, and hopeleſs view of the felicities of heaven, which he hath forfeited by his ſins—the recollection of paſt pleaſures which now ſerve only to increaſe his ſufferings—the direct pains of an avenging fire—and, finally, the deſpair that muſt ſpring from the dreadful conviction that his miſeries ſhall have no end.

"He ſeeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his boſom."

In ſome way which we cannot at preſent comprehend, it is probable that the glory of the heavenly ſtate will be revealed to the unhappy *ſpirits in priſon*, only to heighten the ſeverity of their ſufferings by a knowledge of the felicity which they have loſt by their crimes. Thoſe clear diſcoveries of God, of which the ſoul in its unembodied ſtate will be capable, may become a ſource of miſery to the reprobate in hell, proportioned to the ineffable happineſs that flows

from them to the redeemed in heaven. The preſence of virtue even among men commonly confounds vice, and affects it with ſhame and remorſe. And ſometimes we have ſeen the apprehenſions of divine juſtice ſeizing upon the mind, and concurring with the ſenſe of guilt, overwhelm it in deſpair. If the imperfect virtue of a worm of the duſt can often cover an offender with confuſion—if a ſingle ray of the eternal juſtice of heaven let in upon the guilty conſcience can ſo agitate and convulſe the ſoul, what will be its terror and diſmay when all the dreadful ſplendors of infinite purity, ſhall be forever preſent to her view?

From another principle, the diſcovery of the divine perfection may increaſe the unhappineſs of the guilty who are excluded from it, and are rendered incapable of enjoying it. God is the natural centre of the ſoul. Towards him ſhe will propably tend, when diſencumbered of the body, by a ſtrong and phiſical attraction as the only ſource of her happineſs, even while a moral diſcordancy may ſeparate her from him, and an inſupportable weight of guilt ſink her down to the abyſs of impure ſouls.

Painful and dreadful will be the conflict between theſe phiſical and moral tendencies. Often carried out in fervent and inextinguiſhable aſpirations, in ſighs and groans to be re-united to the infinite centre and the ſource of good, ſhe will feel herſelf repelled from it by the impurity of her nature, and the unchangeableneſs of her deſtiny. If, for a moment ſhe ſeems to riſe towards heaven in paſſionate and diſtracted wiſhes, it is only to plunge her, the next moment, deeper in the hopeleſs horrors of her priſon.

The puniſhment of this miſerable ſufferer ſeems alſo, to have been increaſed by the moſt afflicting and involuntary compariſons.—Afar off he ſees Lazarus enjoying eternal reſt. The wretch who once lay forgotten at his gate, when a proſperous fortune, and continual pleaſures made him forget that he was a man, is now clothed with glory and immortality, while he himſelf lies wrapt in unquenchable fires. Miſerable ſoul! A merciful heaven, and an avenging hell ſeem equally to concur in his perdition. Imagine what will then be his ſecret ſentiments, or his deſpairing cries. —Oh! to reſemble that man whom once I

would not have ſet with the dogs of my flock! What a falſe eſtimate have I made of true honor, and of true happineſs! Infinite, folly! to throw away the immortal prize that was in my offer! that felicity I might have poſſeſſed.—But ah! I have ſacrificed it for frivolous joys that leave nothing real behind them but the diſtracting ſting of their remembrance!

This is the ſecond ſource of his miſery, the recollection of the paſt.

"Son! ſaid Abraham, *remember* that thou, in thy life time receiveđſt thy good things." And it is reaſonable to believe that he would forever torment himſelf by an inceſſant vibration of mind between the paſt and the preſent. In a moment all his former happineſs, and the whole proſperity of his firſt fortune, ruſhes on his recollection—its loſs ſhews it with increaſe—and again, in a moment all the horrors of his preſent ſtate ſurround him.—Dreadful compariſon of what he was, with what he is!—Fortune ſeemed at my command—my days paſſed in feſtivity, my nights in pleaſure—perpetual gaieties made up the ſcene

of life, and ſeldom was it interrupted by fear or by ſuſpicion. But oh! thoſe fatal joys! Amidſt deceiving ſmiles that baniſhed apprehenſion, they were ſecretly leading me to that dreadful precipice from whence they have at length, caſt me into this tormenting lake! The mercies of divine providence, which if they had been enjoyed with moderation, and with gratitude, might have prepared my ſoul for heaven, have, alas! been employed only to nouriſh this body for the flames that now conſume it.

Add to the comforts and pleaſures of life, thoſe excellent means of grace with which God may have favoured him for the attainment of his ſalvation—Poſſibly, happy natural talents and diſpoſitions—an uſeful education—a pious domeſtic example—the counſels and concern of friends, of parents, of the miniſters of religion who would have led him to the true objects of duty—the reflections of an improved reaſon—the admonitions of an enlightened conſcience—the inſtructions of the word and providence of God—and, co-operating with all theſe, the ſecret ſuggeſtions of the holy ſpirit. Theſe ineſtimable mercies,

which are deſigned to cultivate the ſoul for the ſociety of the bleſſed, muſt aggravate the condemnation of thoſe who reſiſt or deſpiſe them. The recollection of abuſed privileges that once placed him ſo near the gate of heaven, would urge the ſting of remorſe the deeper in his breaſt.

Theſe are the pains of memory. But ſome more direct puniſhment by an avenging fire ſeems to be implied in his bitter exclamation, *I am tormented in this flame.* This is the third circumſtance in his ſufferings that deſerves your moſt ſerious attention.

The language of the holy ſcriptures hardly leaves us room to doubt but that divine juſtice will employ an elemental fire as a miniſter of its dreadful decrees on the ſinner. And it is of importance to inculcate this truth upon mankind: for, while they conceive that the torments of hell ſhall conſiſt chiefly in mental pains, ſinners, who have been accuſtomed to manage their conſcience in this world, will ſtill hope to elude its reproaches in the next. Suffering gives the chief force to the ſentiment of

guilt. And certainly, nothing can be more awful than the denunciations of the holy ſpirit upon this ſubject—"The ſon of man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and thoſe who do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire. There ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth."* "The Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."† "If any man worſhip the beaſt—he ſhall be tormented with fire and brimſtone—and the ſmoke of their torment aſcendeth up forever and ever; and they have no reſt day nor night."‡—Ah! what a picture of miſery and deſpair! The ſinner, forever penetrated by avenging fires, finds his being ſtill repaired by an inviſible power, and growing again to the flame—forever waſting, yet never deſtroyed.

* Mat. xiii. 41, 42.
† II. Theſſ. i 7, 8, 9.
‡ Rev. xiv. 9, 10, 11.

In the midſt of the fire that is not quenched, is the worm that never dies, and fills thoſe dreadful abodes with eternal *wailings and gnaſhing of teeth.* Under the anguiſh of ſuch ſufferings, in what fearful execrations will the reprobate children of deſpair vent the bitterneſs of their rage, or pour forth their complaints to their unpitying dungeons! They curſe the day that firſt ſhone upon a wretched being—they curſe the reaſon that made them capable of ſinning—they curſe the author of their miſerable exiſtence—they curſe that exiſtence that makes them only ſenſible of pain. Their ſweeteſt conſolation would be, to be blotted out of the works of God. Ah! how dreadful is the ſtate that forces them to cry for eternal death, as a refuge from eternal ſufferings! How much more dreadful is it when death invoked will never come!

This is the laſt circumſtance of terror in theſe ſufferings, that they will be endleſs.

The eternal duration of the puniſhments of the wicked, in a future ſtate, is declared to us in terms ſo expreſs in many paſſages, and is ſo applied in the whole ſtyle of the

facred writings, that it requires the moſt ſtrained criticiſms to make them ſpeak any other language. This is among the doctrines which we ought to receive implicitly from the word of God, according to the moſt ſimple and obvious meaning of the terms in which it is declared. We are unable to penetrate even by probable conjectures, into the eternal world; and our reaſon, or our ſenſibilities muſt form the moſt inadequate meaſures, by which to judge of the moral plans of infinite wiſdom, and infinite juſtice. For proof of this we need go no farther than thoſe innumerable ſcenes of miſery that exiſt in the preſent world. What a different ſyſtem of things would the preſumptuous mind of man have preſcribed to the wiſdom of the Deity? If it were not witneſs of the facts, would it not have denied the poſſibility of their exiſtence in the works of an infinitely benevolent being? Incompetent then, as we are, to determine what is wiſe or good in the boundleſs and eternal ſyſtem of the Creator, our wiſdom and our ſafety conſiſts in receiving ſubmiſſively, and without any modifications ſuggeſted by our own feelings, what he hath been pleaſed to reveal concerning the inſcrutable ſubjects

of eternity, and, especially, concerning the everlasting state of wicked men. Hear then the righteous and fearful decree that shall be passed upon the guilty at the last judgment —" depart ye cursed into *everlasting fire* prepared for the devil and his angels." *So these shall go away into everlasting punishment. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever.* The most dreadful idea in the torments of hell is, that they shall be *forever and ever. The furnace of the wrath of God* burns with *unquenchable* fire. When the guilty soul surveys the horrors of her destiny, then casts her view forward into futurity as far as her thoughts can reach, but can find no period, no mitigation of her pains— what despair must overwhelm her!—Dreadful is the present! but oh!—the future is hopeless!

Such is the unhappy termination of a life of pleasure and self indulgence, which the history of this rich man presents to us. It paints, in the most affecting colours, the infatuation of those who sacrifice the immortal interests of the soul for the false and fugitive enjoyments of sense. This story conveys a lesson the more instructive, because it

is that of a man who, as far as appears to us, was not profligate, cruel, or unjuſt. His ſupreme object ſeems to have been to enjoy himſelf. Vain, perhaps, and oſtentatious, he lived in ſplendor and in pleaſure. But, in the indulgence of pleaſure he ſeems to have been *forgetful* of his duties to heaven, rather than *impious*—*inattentive* to the offices of charity, which the neceſſities of Lazarus demanded, rather than *inhuman*—incapable of the *ſelf-government* and *ſelf-denials* that religion requires, rather than *indecent in his morals.* Yet, at laſt, you ſee him make his bed in hell. From the flattering arms of unſuſpected joys, he deſcends to the cruel embrace of everlaſting flames. Conſider and lay to heart, ye who are lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of God, this awful example of the holineſs and juſtice of the Supreme Judge—ye who flatter yourſelves that you are innocent as long as you are not profligate—who imagine that, if you preſerve your manners within certain boundaries permitted by faſhion, and do not openly offend againſt the ſentiments of mankind, you will not be queſtioned for the graces of the goſpel. Ah! look on this miſerable *ſon of perdition* and correct errors ſo fatal.

It is poſſible to preſerve a fair and decent exterior, to be approved and even admired by the world, and yet be found wanting in the balances of divine juſtice.

Above all, let thoſe who refuſe to liſten to admonition or advice in their career of pleaſure—who ſeldom are calm and impartial enough to reaſon fairly on the pernicious tendency, and fatal termination of their courſe—who have not ſentiment enough to be moved by any repreſentation of the charms of virtue, nor grace ſufficient to underſtand the beauties of holineſs, attend to the object preſented to them in this parable. It addreſſes our ſenſes and our fears the only remaining principles by which we can reach the heart when reaſon is overborne and the ſentiments of piety are extinguiſhed in the riot of the paſſions. For this purpoſe I have endeavoured to raiſe up to your view an unhappy ſpirit from thoſe diſmal abodes, that the image of another's miſery may bring you, if poſſible, to timely reflection. You behold in him a preacher who ſpeaks to you from the place of ſufferings. You who aſk with affected indifference, or with impious levi-

ty what paſſes in that inviſible world, learn it from one who ſhews you what he is, and tells you what he ſuffers.—He beſought Abraham that Lazarus might be ſent to admoniſh his incredulous brethren of their danger—Miſerable ſoul! that office he performs himſelf to you. And he raiſes his voice amongſt us to day to warn you leſt you alſo come to that place of torment. Eternal author of truth! add to this awful admonition, the effectual perſuaſion of thy Holy Spirit!

AMEN!

DISCOURSE V.

THE PENITENT WOMAN AT THE FEET OF JESUS.

LUKE VII. 37, 38.

And behold a woman in the city, who was a ſinner, when ſhe knew that Jeſus ſat at meat in the Phariſee's houſe, brought an alabaſter box of ointment, and ſtood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to waſh his feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kiſſed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

A COURTEZAN of Jeruſalem appears in this hiſtory as an humble penitent at the feet of Jeſus. In the purſuits of pleaſure her paſſions had overborne that exquiſite delicacy of ſentiment, and that timid and retiring modeſty which, as it is

the principal charm, is alſo the firmeſt guard of the virtue of the ſex. She had loſt even that ſcrupulous regard to character and propriety of conduct in the eye of the world which is commonly the laſt virtue which a woman abandons. The diſorders of her life were publicly known. But the vivacity of her feelings, which was probably the firſt cauſe of her errors, became, when directed by divine grace towards its proper objects, the chief ſource of that lively contrition, and thoſe tender expreſſions of attachment to her Saviour, which render her penitence ſo intereſting. She had miſſpent the generous force of her heart on objects that only deluded and diſappointed her. But no ſooner had ſhe heard this ſublime teacher ſent from God, who pointed out to her the true road to happineſs, than ſhe renounced her ſins, and *attached herſelf ſolely* to him. Her repentance became as conſpicuous as her vices had been public. Her vanity, nouriſhed by the inſidious flatteries of men, ſhe mortified by the deepeſt humiliations. The feet of her Lord ſhe waſhed with the tears of her remorſe, and her gratitude. Although ſhe was not ignorant of the reproaches, and the ſneers ſhe

must encounter in discharging these pious offices from the company assembled at the Pharisee's house, who were acquainted with her former habits of life, yet she resolved to constrain her feelings, and resolutely to meet them all. Her humiliations, her tears, and the sacrifices which she made attest at once the depth of her sorrow for her offences, and the fervor of her love for her Saviour. They shew us a woman of high sensibility; but of a sensibility that, having once been abused, is now the more profoundly penetrated with the sentiments of repentance—that, having once been wasted on vain and criminal objects, attaches itself now with the greater ardor to the chief-good. The advantages of person, and the decorations of art which she had employed to foster vanity, or inflame the passions, she now renounces or neglects. Having once dishonored religion, and offended virtue by the dissoluteness of her manners, she is resolved to make them all the reparation in her power by the publicity of her conversion.—She instructs us therefore by her love—by her humility—by her self-denial—and by her zeal. These are genuine characteristics of sincere repent-

ance: and, by a few reflections on each in the following diſcourſe, I ſhall endeavor to develope the ſpirit of a real penitent.

I. In the firſt place, we diſcern in her conduct the fervor of her love to the Saviour.

She ſtood behind him as he lay reclined at the table of the Phariſee, and ſhed upon his feet a flood of tears. With officious tenderneſs ſhe wiped them with her hair; and anointed them with a precious perfume reſerved for this pious purpoſe, from the lately abuſed ſtore of her wealth.* Thoſe offices of hoſpitality which were expected only from the maſter of the houſe,† ſhe per-

* The courtezans of antiquity not infrequently acquired large fortunes. Their dreſs and furniture were rich. They were commonly diſtinguiſhed for beauty. And their houſes being often places of public reſort for men of talents and leiſure, they were uſually remarkable alſo for wit. Attention to theſe circumſtances may be neceſſary in order to perceive the propriety of ſome expreſſions in this diſcourſe.

† In that age the maſter of the houſe always ordered his gueſts to be furniſhed with water for their feet, and frequently with a bath for the whole perſon before eating, and, after bathing, with ointment with which to anoint themſelves. Their poſture at table is known to have been reclining upon couches, which explains the attitude in which this woman is repreſented.

forms herself, and in the manner most calculated to express the fervor of her affection. Those tears were not merely the streams of her repentance for her errors, but the burst of a tender heart overflowing with the love of Christ.

In her pursuit of pleasure she had been unhappy. Deceived, probably, by faithless lovers, and disappointed in every creature of the happiness she had expected from it, she sought only, by perpetual change of object, to fill the painful void which all objects in succession left. Her passions importunate and imperious, having involved her in dishonorable situations, from which she had not the courage to free herself, urged her against reputation, against conviction, and, often, even against her wishes, to the pursuit of new gratifications from which she perpetually returned with fresh proofs of their vanity and misery.

But when Jesus Christ had opened to her the true sources of happiness, and enabled her by the aids of his grace to break her unfortunate and criminal connexions with so many objects that had occupied and

deceived her heart, her affections, that had been diſſipated and waſted in a thouſand different ſtreams, now collected into one channel, flow to her Redeemer in a full and abundant tide. All her ſenſibilities here enjoy a lawful, a delightful, and unlimited exerciſe.

Many conſiderations would combine to increaſe the fervor of her devotion. Her diſappointments from the world, and the ſhocks with which her heart had met from her firſt lovers, would prepare her to return to God as her *exceeding joy*. Her mind was opened, by divine grace, to the diſcovery and the love of infinite perfection, to which, amidſt ſo many criminal loves, it had hitherto remained blind. Having been converſant only with the vile and deteſtable forms of vice, the charms of virtue appeared to her with a tranſcendent and divine beauty.

But, at this moment, ſhe moſt deeply felt her obligations to her Saviour. Jeſus had reſtored her from the path of infamy to the path of honor. An outcaſt from ſociety for faults, for which no repentance can

atone among men, ſhe was graciouſly received by him who knew her heart, and who ſaw her ſincerity. He enlightened her mind—he taught her hopes to aſpire—he forgave her offences—he was himſelf the ſacrifice for the ſins which he forgave. Awakened to a view of all her guilt, and to the miſery and infamy to which her paſſions had reduced her, ready to deſpair of the mercy of God, as ſhe had experienced the unpitying cenſure of the world, with what gratitude and joy would ſhe ſee herſelf reſtored to purity by the word of Chriſt, and, by his interceſſion and atonement, made an heir of immortal felicity and glory! Here was the ſource of thoſe ſtrong emotions, and of thoſe affectionate and aſſiduous attentions, which ſhe was unable to reſtrain, even in the preſence of men who ſuſpected her motives, and were unfriendly to her character.

This is the hiſtory of a real penitent. The love of Chriſt, and of God through him, now reigned ſupremely in her heart. "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind," is the

law equally of reaſon and of revelation. Towards that eternal ſource of intelligence and truth a pure and enlightened reaſon will ſeek to bend all her powers. Into that infinite ocean of goodneſs and benignity, all the little ſtreams of good in man will delight to pour themſelves. A mind, therefore, that is truly penitent, and renewed after the image of God, will demonſtrate its change by the warm and lively courſe of its affections towards him. The heart he formed for himſelf. To withdraw it from him, and to devote it excluſively to other objects is a criminal diverſion of its powers. It is, beſides, miſtaking the means of our happineſs to ſeek it from things ſo imperfect, treacherous, and inconſtant. A man who had amply tried whatever pleaſures the world can yield returned from them with the ſad experience that *all is vanity and vexation of ſpirit*. On the fluctuating ocean of life nothing is ſtable or ſatisfying; and the reſtleſs heart of man, always deceived, yet never taught wiſdom by its errors, only abandons one purſuit for another equally vain. When, convinced at laſt that its infelicity ariſes, not ſo much from miſtaking its object as from the eſſential imperfection of

the objects excluſively of God, it returns to him who embraces in himſelf all that is excellent and perfect in the univerſe, with what ſtrong and fervent affections will it cleave to him as its chief good? In him it finds a ſweet repoſe from all the agitations and tumults of the world—He is able to fix all its wanderings—He can ſatisfy the infinity—he can fill the immenſity of its deſires. He offers to its affections the moſt ſublime of all objects, infinite power, and benignity, infinite purity and truth. The love of God in a good man, ſeizing upon all the powers of his ſoul, will mingle itſelf not only with his devotions, but with all his ordinary occupations. He ſees God in every thing that he beholds, he poſſeſſes him, if I may ſpeak ſo, in every thing that he enjoys. The whole world, that was curſed to man by ſin, is again ſanctified to his uſe by the ſpirit of divine love.

But the higheſt and moſt delightful exerciſe of this affection a ſincere penitent muſt find in contemplating his Saviour, and recognizing his obligations to redeeming mercy. Is it poſſible to believe the truths which are taught in the ſacred ſcriptures concern-

ing the guilt of man, and the incarnation and ſacrifice of the ſon of God, and to feel our own intereſt in them, and not to be penetrated with the tendereſt, and the ſublimeſt ſentiments of gratitude and admiration? By his grace, the ſlaves of ſin are *made free with the liberty of the ſons of God*—The priſoners of juſtice are made to *ſing of mercy*—the victims of eternal death are made heirs of immortal life!—He hath *redeemed us from the curſe of the law, having been made a curſe for us*, and having *borne our ſins in his own body on the tree. O the heighth and the depth, the length and the breadth of the love of Chriſt that paſſeth knowledge!* There are moments in which a pious man feels theſe ideas to be almoſt too powerful for the feebleneſs of human nature. No language is ſufficient to expreſs the emotions that fill his heart. Like the woman, he weeps at the footſtool of divine grace—he would, if poſſible, kiſs the Redeemer's feet. But the burden of his gratitude often makes him dumb, and he gives himſelf up to unutterable feelings.

Indiſcreet acts of zeal in ſome weak but well-meaning perſons, and hypocritical pre-

tensions in others to high fervors in religion, in order to cover unworthy designs, have, with men of reflecting minds, and worldly principles, brought a degree of suspicion on all the visible acts of a warm and affectionate piety. They would reduce religion to a lukewarm profession, and a formal detail of exterior rites in which the heart is not concerned. But, surely, if men be capable of high sentiment, or of strong and tender feelings upon any occasions, the great and transcendent objects presented to us in the gospel should have the power of awakening them in the breast. And the truth is, whatever be the degree of natural sensibility which a good man possesses, it will shine out in his religious profession. Love preserves the same character in religion as in other subjects. It cannot be smothered in the soul. It seeks for means by which to express itself, not only in the fervency of its devotions but in its zeal for whatever is connected with the glory of God, the felicity of mankind, and the progress of piety and virtue in the world. It is superior to a cold and inanimate formality, to which the error, and the practice of so many in

the chriſtian world would confine it. Religion has its forms. But the ſpirit of divine love puts into them a holy energy and life.

II. This penitent inſtructs us likewiſe by her deep humility, which is another eſſential character of ſincere repentance.

Her copious tears, her fine but diſhevelled hair applied to the humbleſt offices, beſpoke the lowly ſentiments of her mind. No mortifications appeared to be too great for one who felt herſelf to be, what the Phariſee unkindly called her, *a ſinner*. And her whole conduct demonſtrates that ſhe aſcribed to her bleſſed Lord alone her deliverance from the ſhameful ſlavery of her ſins, and that ſhe held herſelf bound to him by eternal obligations.

Humility is a diſpoſition peculiarly adapted to the ſtate of man whether we conſider his frailty, his dependent condition, or the errors and miſeries with which he is ſurrounded. *His days on earth are as a ſhadow*, and he *is cruſhed before the moth*. Sprung from the duſt, and born in ſorrow,

he is haſtening through a vale of tears to reunite himſelf to the earth from which he was taken. There is little reaſon for pride in a worm of the duſt *who exiſted but yeſterday;* and ſmall cauſe have we for boaſting or confidence in that ſpark of reaſon that, ſtruck out of darkneſs but a moment ſince by the hand of the Almighty, is hardly ſufficient to guide our path through this world; but, to futurity, and the higheſt objects of our intereſt and duty, is wholly blind. The moſt humiliating conſiderations ariſe out of every view we can take of human nature. When we compare our imperfection with thine infinite power, intelligence, and purity eternal God! "what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him!"

But the humility of a penitent ariſes chiefly from a profound and affecting view of his ſins againſt God. The talents of the mind and the faculties of the body, which ſhould have been employed only in the ſervice of the Creator, have been often uſed to his diſhonor. The heart, which he created only for himſelf, has been devoted to inferior purſuits, and exhauſted in falacious and

criminal enjoyments—The bleſſings of his providence which ſhould habitually have recalled him to mind with a thankful recollection, have too often, alas! ſerved only to nouriſh and inflame the paſſions. But the higheſt aggravation of ſin, where the name of Chriſt is known, is its reſiſtance to the perſuaſions of the holy ſpirit, the contempt it pours upon the love of the Son of God, and its profanation of his precious blood ſhed for the redemption of the world. Theſe conſiderations moſt deeply penetrate the mind of a ſincere penitent, and fill it with remorſe and ſhame. Condemned by the ſentence of the divine law, he is not leſs condemned by the ſentence of his own heart. "Wherefore, ſaith the ſacred writer, ſpeaking in the name of all penitents. I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes!"

One of the principal fruits, and one of the moſt certain proofs of true humility of mind, is an unbounded gratitude to the Saviour and unlimited truſt in his merits. In our own imperfect obedience, as there is no vindication of the rights of the violated law, there can be no ſolid ground of *hope towards God.* For "*our righteouſneſſes are*

as filthy rags, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away.' No argument can carry this truth with such persuasion to the heart that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by grace we are saved," as our own consciousness in those moments of humiliation and repentance when we perceive the magnitude and extent of our offences against God. Even the mercy that encourages our hope, will, by painting in deeper colours our ingratitude and guilt, the more completely destroy every plea of self-righteousness.—Blessed Jesus! we believe that "there is no other name but thine under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved."

III. Connected with the humility of the penitent in our text is her edifying self-denial.

Retiring from all the scenes of her past delights she consecrates the powers of her heart, and the labours of her hands only to her Saviour. She esteems it not sufficient to have forsaken her vices; but she makes a voluntary sacrifice of all the objects that might tend to rekindle her passions. Even

thoſe lawful poſſeſſions or enjoyments which, having been once abuſed, had become connected by habit or by memory with her ſins, ſhe renounces. Her perſon, which ſhe had ſo carefully decorated from improper views, is now neglected in its ornaments —She ſeems willing to mortify it for having been once too pleaſing. The rich perfumes with which ſhe had ſtudied to inchant the ſenſes, ſhe caſts away. What is valuable in them ſhe conſecrates to Chriſt—for the reſt, ſhe uſes them no more for her own pleaſure. Her hair, the glory of her head, which ſhe had ſo often dreſſed for allurement, now careleſs and diſhevelled, as if to mark her repentance for its firſt abuſe, ſhe applies to the humbleſt office. The luſtre of her eyes, that had ſo often ſparkled with impure fires, ſhe quenches in a flood of tears,* and ſhe now employs them only in expreſſions of humility and grief.

Admirable example! The ſpirit of repentance will lead a good man not only to renounce his paſſions, but to ſhun the motives and occaſions of exciting them—the

* Maſſillon—La peckereſſe de l'evangile.

places which have been formerly the scenes of them—the aids and the arts which they have employed to compass their gratification. In consequence of the natural and powerful principle of association in the human mind, he is prone to regard with abhorrence, or with fear, whatever has been connected, by any close tie, with vice. The concomitants of vice he sacrifices along with the vices themselves. This is likewise a principle of prudence. For such is the frailty of the heart that the most sincere convert may expose his virtue to danger by incautiously frequenting scenes, or by indulging an unnecessary familiarity with objects, that have formerly been to him the occasions, or the ministers of sin. His passions accustomed to kindle at the sight of them, may, by the influence of habit, insensibly become enflamed, and in an unguarded moment, he may be surprised into a fault. It is necessary not only to flee from the sins that are in the world, but often to flee from the world itself. Retirement, self-denial, moderation, and even abstinence in pleasure are frequently requisite in order to preserve our virtue, and to impose a proper guard upon the passions.

A queſtion has been raiſed, to what degree may amuſements, recreations, and generally all ſenſible pleaſures, be lawfully purſued by a good man? And when do they become blameable? It is difficult to mark out any limits on this ſubject that ſhall be preciſe and accurate. They, are not the ſame, perhaps, to every man—much depends on character, on habit, on the peculiar irritability of the paſſions, and on many circumſtances that vary with the individual, and cannot be embraced in any general rule. Conſiderations of this nature, while they ought to render a man candid and liberal in his interpretation of the conduct of others, ſhould make him rigorous in judging of his own. Whatever he has found, by experience, to impair the firmneſs of his pious reſolutions, or to diſcompoſe the ſerene and ſteady habit of his devout affections, to him becomes criminal. And if he has diſcovered that companies of a certain kind are unfriendly to ſerious reflection—if public diverſions and amuſements have diſſipated the heart, and rendered it leſs prepared to approach to God in the exerciſes of a ſpiritual and lively devotion—if any worldly cares have occupied too large

a portion of his time to the exclusion of the higher and nobler objects of religion—if attentions to the person have had too much of a sensual aim—if the arts of corrupting have been studied in the arts of pleasing, he will still regard with a holy jealousy and caution what has once proved to him a dangerous snare. He will imitate the prudent and generous self-denial of this penitent woman who renounced even her temptations. It is in vain to ask, is not company innocent? Are not amusements lawful? Is not a certain conformity to the world justifiable? Are not attentions to please laudable? I agree—No one disputes the principle thus generally expressed. It is in the particular applications of it that the difficulties arise. And, whatever indulgences might be admitted in a general theory of morals—whatever, in practice, might be safe and lawful for others, the question recurs, have they been found to produce an ill influence on the state of your mind, or the habits of your conduct? Have they occupied that time which ought to have been employed in pursuits more useful and more worthy of your nature? Have they tended to awaken criminal passions in your

own breaſt? Have they been deſigned to excite looſe deſires in others? In one word, do they ſeem to have interpoſed a diſtance between your ſoul and God? Have they made you leſs circumſpect in your conduct, and leſs vigilant over all the movements of the heart? Have they rendered you more forgetful of your dependent ſtate, and of your eternal deſtiny? In proportion as they have been followed by theſe effects they have become ſinful. And, I repeat it, true repentance will make the ſacrifice of them. The ſpirit of repentance never aſks what is the exact limit between virtue and vice, in order that it may approach, as near as poſſible, the confines of forbidden pleaſures. It ſtudies to keep far within that dangerous boundary. It is inclined rather to carry abſtinence from pleaſure to a holy exceſs, if I may ſpeak ſo, than to permit one doubtful liberty. Job *made a covenant with his eyes* in order to guard the purity of his heart. And every man who is honeſt to himſelf will perceive ſome *ſin which more eaſily* than others *beſets him*, and with regard to which he finds himſelf more frail. Here all his guards ought to be doubled—all his vigilance ought to exhauſted. A good

man will fear and shun the opportunities and incitements of temptation, as well as abhor and flee from sin.

IV. This penitent instructs us, in the last place, by the holy zeal with which she avows her change of life, and professes her attachent to her great deliverer.

She had wounded the interests of piety and virtue. She is solicitous, by her future conduct, to repair the effects of her fatal miscarriages. Her course of reformation she commences by a profession of her pious purpose, and an acknowledgment of her duty as public as had been her offences. She did not come to Jesus by night, like the ruler of the Jews who, through a false pride, thought to conceal from the observation of the world, the most honorable action of his life—she did not go to meet him in the distant villages, or, in the mountains to which he often retired apart to pray, that she might reveal to him, in private, the sentiments of her heart—Her offences had been notorious—Jerusalem knew that she was a sinner*—And in that city

* Massillon.

that had been the theatre of her diſhonor, ſhe went by day, in the ſight of all into the houſe of the Phariſee, and, in the preſence of the aſſembly that was there convened, ſhe conſecrates herſelf to the ſervice of Chriſt. She was not aſhamed of the cauſe of virtue and piety which ſhe had recently embraced. She was aſhamed only of having embraced it ſo late.

An open and decided profeſſion of religion is an homage which every good man owes to the cauſe of truth. The weight of his example, whatever it may be, he ſhould add to the ſcale of virtue. A ſincere penitent will be ſolicitous to make an early reparation to the injured honour of his Saviour as conſpicuous as his faults have been. But as the habits of the world are, in many reſpects, in oppoſition to the ſpirit of religion, the young convert is apt to perceive a degree of ſhame in abandoning its party, which is ſupported by numbers, and going over to the thin and deſerted ranks of religion. Yet a lively ſenſe of redeeming love will render him ſuperior to this falſe ſhame. Aſhamed only of having ſo long purſued

the paths of vice and folly, he will feel the dignity of a return to reason and virtue.

Do you dread and shrink from the observation of a scoffing and censorious world? Alas! in the course of your vices you feared it not. Why should it affect you only when you are about to enter on the noble resolutions of duty? Do you dread the invidious contrasts that will be drawn between your former manners, and your present change? True it is, the world is prone to call up against those who enter on a new life the memory of their errors. It is willing to reproach religion with them, or to insinuate that pious zeal is merely a hypocritical disguise assumed, for certain purposes, to cover a heart that, in secret, still remains equally enslaved to vice. Thus the Pharisee said of this amiable penitent *she is a sinner.* But, his scorn did not abash her, or restrain, for a moment, the fervent expressions of her duty to her Saviour. The sentiments of love and zeal that filled her heart, rendered her superior to the insult. And let the real penitent know that sincerity will take away the sting of every re-

proach—perſeverance in the path of duty will take away the reproaches themſelves.

The hiſtory which you have been reviewing affords the moſt gracious encouragement to all men, whatever may have been the nature or degree of their offences againſt God, to ſeek his mercy by repentance.—Often, it is not ſufficient for the guilty that they have his general promiſe, "him that cometh to me I will in no wiſe caſt out." They require it to be ſupported by examples, before the trembling and ſelf-reproaching heart can reſt upon it. Here is the example of one who may be ranked among the chief of ſinners, who, notwithſtanding, was received by the Saviour with infinite benignity. Appealing to the proofs which ſhe had given of the reality of her repentance, and the ſincerity of her love, he ſays to the Phariſee "her ſins which were many are forgiven, for ſhe loved much."

Not infrequently, thoſe who have offended highly, when they come to be convinced of their ſins, are ready to deſpair of the mercy of heaven. The ſentiments of their own unworthineſs ſo profoundly penetrate

them, the apprehenſions of the juſtice and indignation of God againſt ſin ſo alarm and terrify them, that they have not compoſure of mind ſufficient to turn a calm and believing view on the merits of the Redeemer, and the all-prevailing atonement of the croſs. They are ready to conclude that *the ſummer is paſt, the harveſt is ended, and they are not ſaved.* Ah! why ſhould you unneceſſarily afflict your ſouls? Behold, in the penitent of our goſpel, a monument of divine grace that is calculated to ſilence all your fears, and is ſufficient to introduce the light of pious hope into the darkeſt and moſt troubled boſom.

Others there are who, though they do not doubt of the mercy and the promiſe of God, do, notwithſtanding, derive the moſt diſconſolate proſpects from within themſelves. The force of their paſſions they perceive to be ſo great that they can hardly flatter themſelves with the hope of being able to bend them under the yoke of religion—their ſenſibilities to pleaſure are ſo lively and impetuous that they deſpair of extirpating them, or making them ſubmit to the painful ſelf-denials of the goſpel. It re-

quires, indeed, an arduous conflict to ſubdue the burning impulſes of a heart too ſenſible to pleaſure, and to divert its force from the groſs and turbulent purſuits of ſenſe to the pure and ſpiritual enjoyments of piety.—But, if it is arduous, bleſſed be God! it is not impoſſible to the energy of reaſon, to the power of reflection, to the ſacred importunity of prayer. A merciful Saviour, alſo, hath not left the iſſue of the conflict to our own weakneſs; but hath graciouſly promiſed the aids of his holy ſpirit to thoſe who aſk him—"Aſk and ye ſhall receive, ſeek and ye ſhall find, knock and it ſhall be opened unto you." And you ſee in the hiſtory of this day, a penitent, whoſe paſſions were unuſually ſtrong, made, by his grace, to feel the all-ſubduing charms of virtue and holineſs. Thoſe ſenſibilities which had once miſled her, now form the moſt ſtriking, and intereſting features of her new character. Such diſpoſitions, when regulated by divine grace, are commonly diſtinguiſhed for a tender, lively, and affectionate piety; and are capable, perhaps, of forming the moſt amiable and perfect characters in religion. To them, probably, we owe thoſe noble ſtrains, thoſe impaſſioned odes which

the royal pſalmiſt of Iſrael employed in the worſhip of God; thoſe ſacred fervors, running through all his divine compoſitions, that continue to animate the devotion of good men in every age. Let not the ſtrength of your paſſions, then, or the vivacity of your ſenſibilities to pleaſure, make you deſpair of attaining to a new life, or even of reaching the ſummits of virtue. Enter ſpeedily, and in earneſt on the arduous labour. And in this, as in every other duty, the promiſe of God will ſtill remain to be your conſolation, and your aid, "my grace is ſufficient for you."

AMEN!

DISCOURSE VI.

ON INDUSTRY.

DELIVERED ON THE SUNDAY PRECEDING THE COMMENCEMENT, 1797.

ROMANS XII. 11.

Not Slothful in Buſineſs.

THE law of Chriſt not only reaches to the principles of conduct in the heart, but extends to the whole detail of our active duties. Among theſe it inculcates induſtry, and diligence in buſineſs, not only by many direct precepts, but by the alluſions and images which it employs to characterize the chriſtian life. It repreſents it as an arduous conflict, as an active race, as a ſtate of inceſſant labour and vigilance.

Some weak or ſuperſtitious minds have imagined that all this ardor is to be employed only in devotion, and thoſe duties that ter-

minate immediately upon God, while they ſuppoſe it hardly reſpects the affairs of civil, of ſocial, or domeſtic life. On the other hand, juſtice, charity, ſobriety, induſtry are eſſential and important duties of the chriſtian law. In the order of life, indeed, they form the moſt numerous claſs of our duties, men have the moſt conſtant uſe for them, they are moſt directly related to the general intereſt and felicity of the world, which is the great end of the divine government. Activity and diligence in the affairs of life may, it is true, proceed from improper motives, and be directed to improper ends. Men may be diligent in the buſineſs of the world, and yet be deſtitute of the grace of God: but, it may be laid down as an immutable truth in religion that no one can be a good man who is not induſtrious in ſome uſeful calling.

Induſtry is the virtue of which I purpoſe to treat on the preſent occaſion; in doing which I ſhall point out both its neceſſity, and its advantages.

It is required of us by God—it is rendered neceſſary by our relations to ſociety—it

is requiſite to the improvement of our own nature—it is intimately connected with other virtues—and it is indiſpenſable to the beſt enjoyment of life. Each of theſe ideas I ſhall explain and extend a little before I apply the ſubject to the chief deſign of our preſent meeting.

I. In the firſt place, it is required of us by God. This appears not only from his holy word, but from the whole fabric and order of the univerſe, and from the organization and ſtructure of our own nature, which are his work. Wherever he manifeſts his power, all things are full of movement and energy. The mighty orbs that compoſe the univerſal ſyſtem wheel on in an inceſſant courſe, and preſerve unbroken the order of day and night, of ſeed time and harveſt. Every atom is in motion, and is perpetually aſſuming new forms of being. That man might not be idle, his Creator hath furniſhed him with a vaſt aſſemblage of aſtoniſhing powers, fitted for an immenſe variety of uſeful ends, and which indeed can be preſerved in a ſound ſtate and brought to the perfection for which they were evidently intended, only by employment

and exerciſe. When we ſee a conſtant and beneficent activity every where eſtabliſhed by God in the conſtitution of nature, it is an indication of his will too clear and unambiguous to be miſunderſtood even by the moſt careleſs obſerver. Were the powers with which man is endued given by him in vain? Shall we ſuffer them to ruſt in our poſſeſſion, and thereby fruſtrate the benevolent deſigns of the Creator? The opportunity and the means of doing good either to ourſelves or others, as they are beſtowed by him, and are the indications of his will, point out to us a ſacred law of duty. As long as any good end can be anſwered by our activity, and that is as long as we exiſt, we are under inviolable obligations to induſtry.

The ſame ſpirit breathes throughout the word of God. Diligence in ſome uſeful buſineſs is repreſented as eſſential to the character of a good man. The apoſtle, in his inſtructions to Timothy hath ſaid, "if any provide not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe, he hath denied the faith and is worſe than an infidel." In deſcribing the character of thoſe widows

whom he permitted to be received upon the charitable liſts of the chriſtian church, he requires that they be "well reported of for good works—that they have brought up children, that they have lodged ſtrangers, that they have relieved the afflicted, and that they have diligently followed every good work." To quote no other example liſten to the reproach which our bleſſed Lord makes to the unhappy man who had not induſtriouſly improved the talent with which he had been intruſted—"Thou wicked and *ſlothful* ſervant!" And let us tremble at the ſentence pronounced upon him, "caſt ye the *unprofitable* ſervant into utter darkneſs—there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth." From hence it appears that, in the final judgment, we muſt render an account of the neglect of our talents as well as of their miſimprovement—of our omiſſions of duty as well as of our poſitive tranſgreſſions.

When, in another paſſage, our Saviour commands his diſciples "not to labour for the meat that periſheth, but for that which endureth to everlaſting life"—can he mean, as ſome have imagined, to recommend a

pious idleneſs, or to make a merit of monaſtic poverty? Can he intend to confine all the images of vigilance and labour by which, in other places, the chriſtian life is repreſented, wholly to the ſecret and interior duties of religion?—It is impoſſible—but knowing how prone mankind are to give the preference to viſible and temporal things above thoſe that are inviſible and eternal, he intends by this ſtrong expreſſion to caſt down the world from its uſurped ſuperiority, and to give their juſt aſcendency in our eſteem and purſuit to the objects of an immortal exiſtence. Amidſt all our juſtifiable concerns for the preſent life, the life to come is of infinitely higher moment, and demands our principal care.

II. Induſtry is a duty required, in the next place, by our relations to ſociety.

No man liveth to himſelf alone. We are all members one of another, and are linked together by innumerable ties of mutual intereſt and dependence. The joint efforts of all are neceſſary for the happineſs of all. Man, as an inſulated individual, is capable of little improvement, and even of

little enjoyment. Arts are invented and cultivated, ſociety advances, and is refined, and the public proſperity is promoted only by united labours. Each one is called to contribute his portion to the common ſtock. Every man, therefore, who is not uſefully employed, may be conſidered as robbing ſo much from the ſum of general benefit and happineſs as his labours ought to have added to it. He does more. His example infects the community. And the idle become injurious, not only by their own indolence, but by their pernicious influence.

Who has a right to enjoy the advantages of ſociety if he contribute nothing to maintain and increaſe them? Shall the wealthy claim this diſhonorable privilege, as if being the ſpring of action in others, and the channels through which the rewards of labour flow to them, *they* might remain idle? No, the ties of reciprocal dependence pervade all orders of the community, and reach, like a mighty chain, from the higheſt to the loweſt. Beſides, is it not manifeſtly unjuſt that thoſe who enjoy the bounties of providence in the greateſt profuſion ſhould employ them to the leaſt worthy purpoſes—

ſhould render themſelves the leaſt worthy of men—ſhould ſuffer their powers to ſtagnate and degenerate for want of a neceſſary and uſeful exerciſe—ſhould become, by their example, the corrupters of ſociety? If God has elevated them to conſpicuous ſtations, and put into their hands the means of doing extenſive good, has he not laid them under proportionally higher obligations than other men to cultivate an intrinſic worth of character, and to co-operate with the great Father of the univerſe in promoting the happineſs of mankind. Can this be effected by an indolent ſelf-enjoyment that takes no intereſt in the affairs of men? Can it, by a luxurious diſſipation in which, though men may be active, they are worſe than idle, and active only to pernicious ends?

To the law of an uſeful induſtry, therefore, the rich as well as the poor, the great as well as the humble are, by their relations to ſociety and to God, equally and indiſpenſably ſubject.

But, independently on theſe high relations, every man is under obligations to in-

duſtry from his holy and tender connections with a family. If he has been thrown by providence among the inferior claſſes of fortune, is it not among the firſt duties both of nature and religion to make proviſion for thoſe of his own houſehold, who depend upon his care, or to whom he has been the voluntary occaſion of exiſtence? —Whatever ſtation he holds, is it not his duty to exhibit before them a worthy example? With aſſiduity to ſuperintend their education on which ſo much depends for their happineſs in life? And to throw round them, in that rank which they poſſeſs, all the reſpectability that virtue, talents, and induſtry can beſtow upon them? Without great vigilance and care in forming the ſentiments and habits of youth, they are liable to ſink into inſignificance, or to fall a prey to the innumerable miniſters of vice that ſurround them. Parents are reſponſible for their children to God, and the public, as well as to their own hearts. For want of that energy and vigilance which a juſt education requires, how many of the poor have plunged into a low and brutal profligacy? how many families of high fortune have gradually degenerated in the qualities both

of their bodies and their minds, till, at laſt, the victims of indolence or vice, they have become utterly extinct?

III. In the next place, induſtry in ſome uſeful purſuit is connected with the improvement and perfection of the powers of our nature.

Continual exerciſe and employment is neceſſary to the ſtrength and vigor both of the corporeal, and the mental qualities. This is a law of nature eſtabliſhed by that infinite goodneſs of which we every where ſee the proofs, and which has intended to promote the perfection of our own nature by means that ſhould be, at the ſame time, eſſentially connected with the good of mankind. That action that is moſt beneficial to ourſelves is that which is alſo moſt uſeful to others—Any faculty that remains unexerted becomes, in time, paralized and enfeebled, and is hardly capable of being applied to the ends for which nature intended it. The ancients, who underſtood ſo well the education of youth, prepared their citizens to become vigorous defenders of their country by the moſt athletic exerciſes; and in their

ſchools they endeavoured to cultivate the reaſon and the genius by ſtudies that required an intenſe and continued exertion of thoſe powers.—Induſtrious and uſeful employment, when mixed with proper recreation favours the vigor and perfection of the body, promotes the improvement of the mind, and imparts ſerenity and purity to the affections. Idleneſs degenerates every thing; and mere amuſement, where *it* occupies a large portion of our time, evaporates the greateſt and moſt reſpectable qualities of human nature.

Beſides, idleneſs is not only an enfeebling quality but forms alſo a contemptible character. A man who is not employed as the author of nature intended he ſhould be—whoſe talents are uſeleſs, and whoſe example is pernicious—who merely eats, and drinks, and ſleeps, or lounges from place to place, an inactive burden on the earth, muſt be deſpiſed by the reſt of mankind; and he will feel, if he has any ſentiment remaining, that he deſerves to be deſpiſed. The induſtrious will regard him with ſuſpicion, as a nuiſance to ſociety, and as likely to prove at laſt a burden upon their charity, if they can be fortunate enough to eſcape his frauds—

The ingenious will look with ſcorn on that ignoble diſpoſition that can conſent to bury the heaven-born ſpark of reaſon under a maſs of inactive corruption—that has no ambition to excel—and cannot be penetrated with the divine beauties of truth and ſcience —And all muſt hold in contempt the man who does nothing worthy the rational, ſocial, and human nature.

IV. Induſtry, is intimately connected with many other virtues.

Order, ſobriety, integrity, and temperance in pleaſure, are uſually aſſociated with induſtrious merit. When a man's powers are fully occupied on uſeful objects he is, in a great meaſure, exempted from the temptations that lead to vice. Labour tends to cool the boiling ardor of the paſſions, and to introduce among them tranquility and order. Intenſe application to buſineſs, exhauſts that irregular and impure fire that is continually drawing aſide into vice thoſe who live without proper employment.

Man being formed for action is reſtleſs and unhappy without it, and is prone to ſeek

that excitement from vicious ideas and purſuits which he ought to receive only from beneficial plans and virtuous engagements. His imagination is apt to be filled with looſe ſcenes—criminal deſires riſe and ferment in his heart—ſenſual appetites are the only principles that have force ſufficient to rouſe and occupy him.—If we look back on life, has it not been when we were moſt idle that we have been moſt expoſed to temptation? Among the idle do we not uſually find the ſlaves of intemperance and debauchery? Among the idle do we not find thoſe who ſacrifice honor, conſcience, and time, by a baſe and pernicious gambling, the ordinary reſource of people without ideas and without induſtry. Are they not the idle to whom time ſeems tedious, and who fly to diſſipation to fill the painful void created by want of uſeful occupation? Do we not among the idle commonly find thoſe who, having waſted their eſtates, or ſuffered them, through inattention, to fall into decay, have been tempted to employ diſhoneſt and criminal means in order to repair them? Are they not the idle alſo who are the tatlers and whiſperers of ſociety, and the authors of miſunderſtanding and diſcontent between

friends and neighbours. Not feeling the excitement to action that ariſes from virtuous principles and induſtrious habits, they abandon themſelves to the ſtimulus of a low and prying curioſity, and their miſerable employment is to hear and retail the anecdotes of ſlander.

But, from no cauſe are the idle more expoſed to danger than from companions like themſelves. They mutually miſlead and enſnare one another. Their evil habits, and their ſinful paſſions acquire additional force, by being ſeparated from the good, and aſſociated only with the bad. How many do we daily ſee, falling, by this means, the victims of habitual intemperance? How many, among the pooreſt claſſes of ſociety, giving up the active and diligent purſuit of honeſt, though humble occupations, for the contemptible and ruinous habits of ſauntering and tipling, leave their unhappy families to ſuffer at home? How many who ought to live by their daily labour, do we ſee turning malicious tale bearers or ridiculous politicians, and regulating, in their pretended wiſdom, the affairs of the ſtate, while their own trades are falling into decay? Theſe

men make up the mob of faction in every country—And your idle politicians, your lounging patriots, and men who have embarraſſed their circumſtances by their own folly and neglect, are always hoſtile to good government, as if the laws were their enemies, and are ready for any diſorder in the republic whenever they can find a wicked and a daring leader.

Honeſt induſtry exempts men from the temptations that lead to moſt, or to all of the crimes which have juſt been mentioned. Intereſt, in that caſe, concurs with inclination to render them ſober, peaceful, and orderly citizens—The fermentation of ſinful paſſions is checked by the active labours, either of the body, or of the mind—Secure, in the exerciſe of their own talents, of a competence always reſpectable in the eſteem of the wife, and poſſeſſing ſufficient to ſatisfy the moderate deſires that are connected with induſtry and labour, they feel little inducement, to turn aſide to the criminal, precarious, and dangerous reſources of knavery for mending their fortune. Along with induſtry we will generally find ſober manners, tranquil paſſions, moderate deſires, up-

right deſigns, benevolent diſpoſitions, a mind ſuperior to fraud, able to rely upon itſelf, ſolicitous for the intereſt of ſociety, and inflexibly attached to duty.

V. I proceed, in the laſt place, to ſhew that uſeful employment is indiſpenſable to the beſt enjoyment of life.

Idleneſs, though often ſought for that purpoſe, is an enemy to true pleaſure. Enjoyment requires vigor, activity, and a certain ſpring upon the powers of nature that cannot exiſt in the langour and laſſitude of inaction. The moderate and conſtant exerciſe of our faculties is no leſs neceſſary in order to taſte the ſatisfactions they are capable of yielding, than it is to bring thoſe faculties to the perfection of which they are ſuſceptible. God hath graciouſly and inſeparably connected the happineſs of all ſenſible and rational beings with the progreſs and improvement of their nature.—Induſtry is abſolutely requiſite to true enjoyment.

After labour, how ſweet to an induſtrious man is that reſt that is neceſſary to refreſh him for his work? What a reliſh does

uſeful employment give to thoſe innocent amuſements with which it is ſometimes lawful to unbend nature after the fatigues of duty? What an exquiſite pleaſure do ſound organs, undepraved appetites, ſimple taſtes, temperate purſuits, ſerene ſpirits, and all the uſeful progeny of labour add to every enjoyment of ſenſe? Do the children of idleneſs and effeminacy know any ſatisfactions comparable to theſe?—Their reſt is laſſitude—their amuſement diſſipation—their appetites are cloyed, and their taſtes blunted by pleaſures that continually offer themſelves before they are demanded by nature. Luxury wears out, and depraves the appetites it was invented to gratify—and indolence rendering them debilitated and impaired, they can enjoy nothing but in conſequence of a thouſand artificial provocatives that rouſe them to a momentary but diſeaſed action.

Are not theſe reflections verified by experience? Where do we find thoſe who are moſt ſerene—who perceive the moſt equal and cheerful flow of ſpirits—and who appear, upon the whole, to have the beſt enjoyment of life? Is it not among the

induſtrious and diligent who are always engaged in ſome proper and beneficial occupation? Where do we find the greateſt liſtleſſneſs, and the moſt frequent chagrin, and complaints of the heavineſs and tediouſneſs of time? Is it not among the indolent? Hardly are they capable of being rouſed into any enjoyment of themſelves but by company, gaming, routs, aſſemblies. They are ready to die with a diſtreſſing langor till the ſeaſon of their diverſions returns—And day after day they repeat the ſame frivolous and inſipid round without taſte, without ſentiment, without any uſeful engagement, and with infinitely leſs ſatisfaction and true reliſh of life than the humble labourer who earns his daily bread by the ſweat of his brow.

If we turn our reflections to the purſuits of literature we ſhall find the idle and the ignorant equally far from true happineſs. It hath pleaſed the Creator to connect the moſt pure and exquiſite ſatisfactions with the love of ſcience, and the attainment of truth. By penetrating and unfolding the ſyſtem of nature we ſeem to enlarge our own being, and to approach towards the

ſupreme felicity of its Author. A man who cultivates liberal knowledge, like him who cultivates piety and virtue, can ſeldom be dependent on any thing without himſelf for his happineſs. He carries continually with him the moſt precious ſources of it in his own breaſt. In proſperity, next to the hopes of religion, it is his richeſt treaſure—by it he is enabled to alleviate affliction—it is the ornament of ſociety, and in ſolitude always a delightful companion—it adorns and ennobles youth—it is the conſolation of age—and confers on venerable years reſpectability and luſtre.

On the other hand, ignorance is as void of ſatisfaction as it is diſgraceful in thoſe who have had the opportunity and the means of improvement. Idleneſs in youth unavoidably lays the foundation of diſhonorable manhood, and of deſpicable age. Nothing can be more contemptible, and often nothing more pitiable, than a vacant old age after an idle and miſ-ſpent youth. Without induſtrious habits, and without ſentiment, taſte, or knowledge, it is a miſerable void. It has no reſource within itſelf to ſupport the ſolitude, the want of cuſto-

mary amuſements, and the neglect it muſt inevitably experience. But age, reſpectable for its knowledge and example, rich in the reputation of paſt uſefulneſs, and the honors paid it by the young, may ſtill enjoy its comforts, and at length ſink down into the grave encompaſſed with the conſolations created for it by the virtues and induſtry of early years.

If induſtry is ſo neceſſary to a good life, and if ſo many benefits flow from it both to ourſelves, and to ſociety, as may perhaps appear from the preceding illuſtrations, you will acknowledge that the duty of the faithful and uſeful employment of time cannot be too frequently, or too earneſtly inculcated upon us either as men, as citizens, or as chriſtians. It is certainly among the beſt means by which a diſciple of Chriſt can adorn the profeſſion of God his Saviour. Induſtry is aſſociated with all the uſeful virtues, idleneſs with all the diſgraceful vices.

I do not mean, however to recommend conſtant and unremitted labour of body or mind. There is an extreme in the beſt

things that ought to be avoided. Some intervals we require for relaxation and refreſhment, and ſome may be profitably as well as agreeably devoted to the civilities, and the rational pleaſures of ſociety. But theſe intervals ought to be regulated by the great end of living, and to be made ſubſervient to the higher and more active duties of life, by fitting us to return to them with greater alacrity, and by improving in our hearts the humane and amiable virtues that connect us with mankind.—No portions of our time, however, ought to be guarded, by a good man, with greater caution than theſe againſt the acceſs of vice. Into theſe, if into any it is able to inſinuate its poiſon unperceived. The moments of relaxation and pleaſure are, commonly, the moments of our greateſt danger. A life of virtue and piety—that is a life worthy of a rational, ſocial, and immortal being, is a life of vigilance, of labour, of conſtant, uſeful, and active exertion.

My brethren, I beg your indulgence in the remaining part of this diſcourſe, while, according to an old and laudable cuſtom in this inſtitution, I addreſs a few reflections

and exhortations to the members of that claſs who are ſhortly about to be admitted to its honors.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN!

You have now finiſhed the uſual courſe of ſtudies in this ſeminary; but you have as yet only entered on the threſhold of the temple of ſcience. You have completed ſome years of laborious and honorable application to letters; but if you would arrive at eminence in your reſpective deſtinations in future life, your labours are only juſt beginning. It would be the effect of unpardonable vanity, and the proof of mis-ſpent time, or of defective talents to ſuppoſe that your acquiſitions hitherto were more than the moſt ſimple elements of ſcience, and humble handmaids to future improvements. Ignorance alone is eaſily ſatisfied with its own attainments, becauſe it ſees not how much is to be known. Real knowledge, by elevating the mind to higher ground, enlarges its horiſon, enables it to diſcern innumerable openings into the diſtant and boundleſs fields of nature that yet remain to be explored, and therefore humbles it with

a diſcovery of the ſmall progreſs it has already made. You have hitherto gained little if you have not acquired habits of application, a taſte for letters, and an ardent thirſt for improvement. With theſe qualities, what you have attained will prove an uſeful introduction to the great circle of ſciences, and enable you to direct your own future progreſs in ſtudy. Without them you may looſe even what you have gained. For, in the ſteep and arduous road of ſcience there is no point of reſt. Unleſs we advance we neceſſarily go backwards.

Induſtry will be eſſential to your ſucceſs if you would riſe to eminence in any liberal profeſſion, or ſerve your country with diſtinction in any reſpectable department of church or ſtate. One or another of theſe objects I preſume is your aim. I will not ſuppoſe that any of you, after the opportunities you have had to elevate and enlarge your views, to refine your ſentiments, and to prepare to act an honorable part on the theatre of public life, can prove ſo unworthy and degenerate as to be contented to drag through the inferior grades of ſociety uſeleſs and undiſtinguiſhed, and to yield the

palm of excellence and merit wholly to others. Shall indolence hereafter deſtroy the hopes of your parents, the expectations of your country, your own honor, and that high reſpect which the elevated and virtuous mind ought to have for itſelf? Shall the degrading love of eaſe and pleaſure, like a blighting mildew, blaſt your improvements in the bud? and prepare for you a manhood unfruitful of honor, and an old age, if you ſhould live to ſee old age, vacant of rational and virtuous enjoyment, and ſtript of the homage due to uſeful and well ſpent years.

You now ſtand on an eminence from which you ſhould look forward to the period when you ſhall be ranked among the future legiſlators, magiſtrates, or interpreters of the religion, or the laws of your country. When you look through the whole compaſs of ſcience, by a general acquaintance with which you ſhould prepare yourſelves for the diſcharge of offices ſo arduous and important, what aſſiduity and perſeverance will even your preparation for public life require?

The time has been in this country when a ſmattering of knowledge aided by ſome ſprightlineſs of natural parts would frequently ſecure to a man in the liberal profeſſions both diſtinction and fortune. That time is nearly paſt. And, by reaſon of the more general diffuſion of learning, and the growing multitude of rivals in every art, and competitors for every office, more ſolid acquirements, and higher qualifications will every day become more neceſſary for ſucceſs.

Beſides, a mere theologian, or a mere lawyer is an inferior character, and not of difficult acquiſition. But to be able to illuſtrate the ſacred writings by all the aids of philology, of antiquities, of criticiſm, of eloquence, and philoſophy—to be the interpreters of juſtice by a familiar recurrence to the pandects and codes of the moſt enlightened nations—to draw political wiſdom from the hiſtory of ages, from an extenſive knowlege of human nature and human ſociety, and from ſo many ſages who have written profoundly on that ſcience, this is an arduous labour—this is a character venerable by its powers, its virtues, and its

uſefulneſs; and it is the only one worthy of a generous ambition, or the noble deſire of doing good.

Every view you can take of the proſpect that lies before you, impoſes upon you high and indiſpenſible obligations to induſtry in thoſe great purſuits to which you have hitherto been only opening a paſſage. Induſtry is the law of your nature—it is the command of God—it is neceſſary in order to cultivate the vaſt and various field of knowledge that ſpreads itſelf out before your view. You are invited to it by the expectations of your country, and by the honors and rewards ſhe has to beſtow on uſeful and conſpicuous merit—And you are invited to it by the certainty you may have of ſucceſs if you are not wanting to yourſelves. For a well directed diligence and perſeverance will eventually inſure ſucceſs even to moderate talents. And without theſe qualities the greateſt talents will be fruitleſs. Indeed the principal differences among mankind in point of knowlege and abilities, commonly depend more upon induſtry, than upon the natural diſtinctions of genius. A miſtaken ſentiment often prevails among young

perſons, which you will do well to correct, that great induſtry is the mark of inferior talents, and that idleneſs and diſſipation are characteriſtics of native genius.*—There is indeed one kind of genius, I mean that which conſiſts chiefly in the livelineſs of the imagination, that has not infrequently been connected with diſſipated manners. However genius of this kind may ſometimes ſerve to enliven ſociety, or to amuſe our hours of leiſure, it is little fitted for buſineſs and affairs, and is utterly incompetent to philoſophic inveſtigation. But that genius that conſiſts in profound and penetrating judgment, that is capable to invent, and improve ſcience, and is really uſeful to the world, is almoſt always united with activity in buſineſs, and perſevering application to ſtudy.† By theſe qualities have the greateſt men in every age been highly diſtinguiſhed. Not to mention the Boyles, the Newtons, and the Lockes of modern times, nor the Pla-

* It is falſe, and is refuted by the example of the moſt elevated characters in our own country, as well as in foreign nations.

† This muſt neceſſarily be the caſe. For if truth and ſcience poſſeſs charms, muſt not the underſtanding that is capable to perceive them delight continually to contemplate them?

tos and Antonines of antiquity, let me recall to your mind only Marcus Tullius Cicero, a name that ſtands for genius itſelf, the greateſt orator, the greateſt ſtateſman, and the greateſt philoſopher that Rome ever produced. A celebrated and accurate writer of his life ſays "his induſtry was incredible, beyond the example, or even conception of our days. This was the ſecret by which he performed ſuch wonders, and reconciled perpetual ſtudy with perpetual affairs. He ſuffered no part of his leiſure to be idle, or the leaſt interval of it to be unimproved; but what other people gave to the public ſhews, to pleaſures, to feaſts, nay, even to ſleep and the ordinary refreſhments of nature, he generally gave to his books, and the enlargement of his knowledge."* Here is an example on which you ſhould be proud to form yourſelves—an example that refutes the dull maxims of idleneſs and profligacy, and points out the real road to greatneſs and honor.

Along with induſtry and a laudable emulation to excell, let it be your care to culti-

* Dr. Middleton's life of Cicero.

vate all thoſe virtues that uſually accompany diligence and uſeful employment—order in your ſtudies and in all your duties, by which you may avoid an unprofitable waſte of time—frugality in living, and economy in expenditures, qualities which alone are worthy either of religion or philoſophy, and becoming the citizens of a free republic—regularity and punctuality in buſineſs, ſo neceſſary for the convenience and comfort of ſociety—honeſty and uprightneſs in your conduct towards men, which is the baſis of our ſocial connexions—piety towards God, which is the foundation of our eternal hopes—Let me add, particularly, ſobriety, and temperance in pleaſure, which youth have ſo many temptations to tranſgreſs, but which are ſo neceſſary in order to preſerve and invigorate the powers both of body and of mind. The intemperate indulgence of appetite waſtes and enfeebles nature, it empoveriſhes genius, it weakens the ſentiments of probity and honor, it is ready to ſacrifice the moſt elevated proſpects of virtue to a low and brutal love of ſenſual pleaſure—and hurries a man almoſt beyond the power of reſiſtance to the precipice of ſhame and ruin.—Cultivate an

honorable thirſt for knowledge, and let your ſtudies be chiefly of the ſeverer kind, and always accurate and ſyſtematic. I mean by *ſyſtem*, remounting to firſt principles.—Looſe and ſuperficial reading tends to foſter vanity and produces little ſcience that is ſubſtantial, or can be applied to real uſe. A courſe of reading that conſiſts of amuſement, principally, ſuch as thoſe fictitious hiſtories which have become ſo faſhionable to the great injury of more ſolid improvements, weakens and effeminates the mind, renders the taſte ſickly, perverts the ideas of real life, and diſqualifies both men and women for fulfilling with dignity and prudence the duties that belong to them either in their civil or domeſtic relations. To hope to become ſcholars or men of buſineſs by ſuch light occupations of the fancy, and ſuch gentle agitations of the heart, would be like an attempt to make Greek or Roman ſoldiers by liſtening to the ſoft notes of the flute, or exerciſing the limbs only in the ſwiming mazes of the dance.—But induſtrious application to uſeful ſtudies tends to cultivate the heart, it ennobles our being—it will prepare for you the public confidence and eſteem, and, a motive that will

be much more ſenſibly felt by young and ingenuous minds, it will fulfil the wiſhes, and complete the felicity of parents who have every title to your love, and whoſe happineſs next to your duty to God, ſhould be your firſt pleaſure, and your firſt care.

But, while I am urging your earneſt and aſſiduous application to purſuits uſeful and honorable in the preſent life, let me not forget that *one thing is*, above all others, *needful*.

Diligence to make your calling and election ſure, is the higheſt obligation that can be laid upon you as immortal beings. If it is proper to urge, as I have done, your ſolicitude to render yourſelves worthy of that honor that cometh from men, how much more ſhould you be concerned to obtain that which cometh from God? If you ſhould ſo *labour for the meat that periſheth*, how much more *for that which endureth to everlaſting life?*—Compare the fallible tribunal of public opinion before which you are ſhortly about to appear, with the ſupreme and impartial bar of God at which you muſt render an account of all the deeds

done in the body—compare the tranſient breath that is fleeting from your noſtrils, and periſhing while we ſpeak, with that immortal exiſtence that ſurvives the grave—Compare the fading and momentary honors of the world, with the eternal and undecaying glories of the heavenly inheritance prepared for his people by Chriſt Jeſus, and can any zeal be too great for ſuch a ſubject? or any language too ſtrong to preſs upon you your duty and your intereſt? All your labours and purſuits in life, your private ſtudies, and your public offices ſhould be made ſubſervient to the chief end of living to the glory of God, and the ſalvation of the ſoul. Every duty in life ſhould be animated, directed and ſanctified by the ſpirit of religion. In the great cauſe of piety and truth *you* ſhould labour with more aſſiduity and zeal than thoſe who have not enjoyed equal privileges with yourſelves. Thoſe privileges have created for you a more extenſive ſphere in which you ſhould be employed in doing good. And for your encouragement ſuffer me to remind you that *God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love.* In the immortal kingdom of the Redeemer, *the juſt ſhall ſhine as the*

brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever. All the labours of integrity, of charity, of virtue, of piety, of public spirit, shall be crowned with glory and felicity proportioned to the rich and extensive benefits that flow from them to mankind.

But in your concern to fulfil your duty as christians, and to secure the favour of God your maker, remember that religion must enter into the inmost recesses, and regulate the deepest springs of the heart. It is not sufficient that the external conduct be modified and formed even upon the most decent pattern of human virtue. The exterior may be irreproachable while the principles and the heart are impure.—If you would be worthy disciples of your Master who is in Heaven, *you must be born again,* —enlightened and sanctified by the spirit of divine truth—and united by a vital faith to the Redeemer who is the advocate and head of all his people. Believe it, and lay it to heart, *there is no name under Heaven given among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus Christ alone.* A life of sincere piety is a life of constant vi-

gilance and labour in order to *fulfil all righteouſneſs*, and to *perfect holineſs in the fear of God*.—Look forward then, my young friends, to the ſcene that is before you both for time, and for eternity. Enter upon it with firm and ardent reſolutions to fulfil its great and intereſting duties. Let no labour deter you—let no watchfulneſs or perſeverance fatigue you. But act up to the high character at which you aim of the ſons of God, and the heirs of eternal life.—Eſtimate the immenſe worth of the ſoul—contemplate the infinite importance of eternity—lay to heart the haſty flight of theſe rapid moments that are bearing us on their wings to an everlaſting ſtate. In a ſhort time all the duties of life ſhall be ended—all the honors of the world ſhall have paſſed away—all that occupies your cares and affections here, together with yourſelves ſhall be buried in that awful and oblivious gulph that has already ſwallowed up ſo many generations of the ſilent and forgotten dead. Nothing will remain but that immortal ſubſtance that can never be extinguiſhed, and the memory of your actions that ſhall follow you to the tribunal of God, and to your eternal deſtiny.—Live under the impreſſion of

truths ſo ſolemn and affecting; and let all the powers of your nature be engaged in the arduous work of your ſalvation.

We now preſs upon the moment that diſſolves the intereſting relation that has ſo long connected us. Speaking to you for the laſt time as your inſtructor, it is my beſt, and moſt earneſt advice, and if they were the laſt words I ſhould ever pronounce, I could only utter them with the greater fervency, *fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man.* Soon death ſhall forever ſtop my tongue and cloſe your ears, and then ſhall we both diſcern, in infinitely ſtronger lights, their unſpeakable importance.—Go, beloved youth! to your ſeveral deſtinations in life. May the God of your fathers protect and guide you! My wiſhes, my prayers, and my hopes ſhall follow you. In hearing of your future virtues and ſucceſs, I ſhall partake of the tender and lively joy of your own parents. But Oh! with pleaſures unknown, and worthy only of eternity, ſhall I hear from the lips of your final judge this bleſſed and merciful decree if he ſhall pronounce it on your diligence and fidelity in all the duties of life—" well

done, good and faithful ſervants! enter ye into the joys of your Lord!"

To that bleſſed end, Almighty God! in thine infinite mercy, bring us all, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord!

AMEN!

DISCOURSE VII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER A MEMORIAL OF CHRIST.

1 COR. XI. 24.

Do this in remembrance of me.

NATIONS have endeavoured to perpetuate the memory of great events, or of illuſtrious benefactors, and individuals to renew the recollection of beloved friends, or of intereſting ſcenes by feſtivals, by monuments, and by tender memorials. In conformity with cuſtoms ſo natural, and that have been eſtabliſhed among mankind from the beginning of time, it hath pleaſed God, in the various periods of his church, to record ſignal events of his providence, or peculiar diſpenſations of his grace by ſimilar monuments and inſtitutions. His gracious covenant with Abraham was perpetuated by a ſeal impreſſed upon all his

offspring. And the deliverance of his people from the bondage of Egypt was celebrated by a feſtival that revived the memory of this illuſtrious miracle throughout every age. The chriſtian church hath, likewiſe, its rites, its feaſts, and its ſeals.—Baptiſm hath ſucceeded to circumciſion as a viſible ſeal of the covenant of grace, and like that, conſiſts of an emblem of the purity of heart that becomes the diſciples of Chriſt. The Lord's ſupper, which we are convened to celebrate, contains the memorial of a much higher ſalvation than that of Iſrael from Egyptian thraldom. It is a feſtival that exhibits in ſignificant emblems, whatever religion contains moſt ſacred in its own nature, and moſt intereſting to mankind. Our bleſſed Lord, the night on which he was betrayed, inſtituted his holy ſupper to be a perpetual rite in his church, that, by the preſence of ſuch lively ſymbols, he might recall to the memory of his faithful diſciples his love, and his ſufferings for them —"Do this, ſaid he, in remembrance of me."

The bread, and the wine employed in this feaſt are expreſſive images of the great

objects it is designed to represent. As the bread corn is ground beneath the weight of the millstone, *so was he wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.* As the wine is pressed from the broken grape, so hath he been cast into the wine-press of divine justice, and broken for our sins.

Our blessed Lord, on that night that preceded the consummation of his great sacrifice on the cross, chose these emblems, and appointed them to be used as perpetual memorials of his sufferings.*—How interesting was that scene! How tender was that moment, when he met the little, and affectionate family of his disciples for the last time! Endeared to them by his labours, by his dangers, and by the ineffable sweetness of his manners—by the sublime and consolatory doctrines of which he had made them the depositaries—by his distinguishing love in selecting them to be ever near his person that they might be the subjects of his divine

* The bread and the wine in this ordinance may be considered as emblems, likewise, of the strength, nourishment, and consolation to be derived from it by a sincere disciple of Christ. But these views of them are not immediately connected with the present subject.

communications, and the heralds of his grace to mankind—himſelf now hunted down by that world which he came to ſave—encompaſſed by malignant enemies thirſting for his blood—ſurrounded by proſpects as gloomy as the ſhades of that dreadful night, under the cover of which they were convened—juſt preparing for a cruel death, and about to be ſeparated from his diſconſolate followers, he took with them his laſt ſupper.—Here every idea that could excite an affectionate remembrance of him, would ruſh upon their minds, and awaken in them the warmeſt and the tendereſt emotions towards their divine Maſter while he was celebrating with them the myſtery of his own death. And, that the ſcene might not be effaced from their hearts by the power of time, which impairs every impreſſion, he gave them theſe precious memorials that they might continually repeat, after his deceaſe, a tranſaction ſo full of holy endearment and tenderneſs.

On ſuch an occaſion they would naturally call to mind his *perſonal qualities* which were the foundations of their eſteem—the innumerable *proofs of his love* of which they

had been both the witneſſes and the objects —and, laſtly, the ſacred *relations* that connected him with them.—Such are the ends intended to be anſwered by tokens given to recall the memory of deceaſed or abſent friends. By reviewing each of theſe topics we may illuſtrate the import of this ordinance conſidered as a memorial of Chriſt.

I. In the firſt place, it ſerves to call to mind his glorious character and perfections as our Redeemer. For, although its principal intention is to be a memorial of his ſufferings, yet we take a deeper intereſt in the pains which he endured when we remember the perfection and glory of his character; and our ſympathy, on ſuch an occaſion, naturally inclines us to recollect all thoſe excellent and divine qualities the remembrance of which will ſerve the more deeply to touch the heart with his unparalled affliction.

Let us then ſurvey this aſtoniſhing victim in his *human*, and his *divine* nature—ideas which compriſe the whole of what we ſhall ſay on this ſubject.

As a man *he was the chief among ten thouſand and altogether lovely.* His benevolence was limited by no bounds—*he went about doing good.* His employment and delight were to relieve the poor, to comfort the diſtreſſed, to inſtruct the ignorant, to ſave the periſhing. By this amiable character was he peculiarly endeared to his diſciples as the kindeſt of maſters, and the moſt affectionate of friends—as their guide in every doubt, their ſupport in every trial, the object of their confidence, and the ſource of all their conſolations and their hopes. The moſt meek of men, he bore the contumely and violence of the Jews with that equanimity and ſweetneſs of temper which exhibited the human character in the moſt amiable and intereſting light. Equally conſpicuous for a prudence that never courted danger, and a magnanimity that never feared it, we find him always reſigned to the will of God, and manifeſting, in the ſevereſt trials, the moſt unruffled tranquility, and the moſt ſublime patience.

Theſe characters of our bleſſed Lord are called to mind in this ordinance, not only as an example for our imitation, but as

forming the moſt perfect and intereſting object of our truſt. The virtues of the man being more within the comprehenſion of the mind than the infinite perfections of the Deity, which often aſtoniſh and confound it, they offer a more definite ground of confidence in the divine promiſe to the humble and penitent believer, and one that comes more home to the human heart. "Let us therefore, ſaith the apoſtle, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need: for, we have not an high-prieſt who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; for he was, in all points, tempted like as we are, yet without ſin."

Another conſideration of the higheſt moment is his divine nature. "In him dwelt all the fullneſs of the God-head bodily." This ſublime view of the perſon and character of the ſuffering Redeemer ſhould never be overlooked by his diſciples in contemplating the ſcenes of his death. It is this that inveſts him with the higheſt glory, that repreſents in the moſt aſtoniſhing light, the condeſcenſions of his love, and our infinite obligations to his mercy, that renders

him, at once, the object of our worſhip and our truſt,—and it is this that impreſſes upon all that he has ſuffered in our room its propitiatory and ſaving efficacy. It is the true, and the only foundation of our hope, for eternal life. In this holy tranſaction, my brethren, you contemplate our bleſſed Lord both as God, and as man. Behold in him, therefore, the moſt perfect of the ſons of men, and *the only begotten ſon of God!* Behold in him the moſt intereſting and lovely of human virtues, and adore the divine luſtre that is ſhed upon them by the glories of the Deity that dwelt in the midſt of them! Behold a high prieſt who ſympathizes with our infirmities by partaking of the ſame nature! Behold a God who has all power to ſave!

II. This feſtival is a memorial, in the next place, of the love of the Redeemer, and of its moſt affecting expreſſions to the world. His whole life was one continued proof and illuſtration of that infinite love which, from eternity, had conceived and prepared the whole ſyſtem of grace. To repreſent it truly would require the lan-

guage of heaven. A few only of the faintest outlines I can attempt to trace.

In order to convey even a feeble image of the truth we ſhould be able to compare the glory which he had with his father before the world was, with the degraded and ſuffering condition to which he ſubmitted for our ſakes. "He, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himſelf of no reputation, and, being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf unto death, even the death of the croſs."* Infinite condeſcenſion! Adorable grace! None but God would have dared to conceive the thought—nothing but omnipotent love could have executed the plans of celeſtial mercy—the eternal ſon of the higheſt became an infant of days! The object of the worſhip of Heaven herded in a ſtall with beaſts! He who held the throne of the univerſe had not where to lay his head! The king of angels and of men expired like a ſlave! And, for whom were all theſe aſtoniſhing ſacrifices? For worms of the duſt, placed, by nature, at an infinite diſtance

* Phil. ii. 6—8.

from the throne of his glory, who might have been blotted out of the univerſe without notice! For ſinners who had turned into rebellion againſt their maker the powers which he had given them. "God commendeth his love to us in that, while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us."* Oh! "the heighth, and the depth, the length, and the breadth of the love of Chriſt that paſſeth knowledge!"† Of this great and intereſting ſubject, a ſincere penitent will entertain the moſt affecting views who is profoundly penetrated with the ſentiment of his own unworthineſs. Humility exalts the redeemer's grace—turn, then, your meditations, in the ſame moment, on your own ſins, and on the riches of redeeming mercy. Let the waters of repentance and of love flow together. United they form the moſt precious ſtream—they fill the ſoul of the believing communicant with the moſt tender and ſincere joys.

This feſtival was deſigned principally to commemorate his ſufferings in that laſt act

* Rom. v. 8.
† Eph. iii. 18.

of his love upon earth when he *poured out his foul an offering for fin.* While he is inſtituting this ordinance, and, with his beloved diſciples, celebrating it for the firſt time, he preſents to our view an affecting ſpectacle. Placed at the head of his own table as a victim ready to be offered up—caſting his view forward to that dreadful ſcene through which he was about to paſs—embracing with ardent affection his afflicted followers whom he was juſt going to leave—and extending, at that awful moment, his cares to all the future periods of his church, he delivered thoſe ſymbols as a perpetual memorial of his love, and ſaid, *do this in remembrance of me.* Bleſſed Jeſus! who can forget thee? Remember thee!—Yes, while memory retains her powers—while the heart can beat with ſenſibility or gratitude—or we have underſtanding left to diſtinguiſh our chief good.

Follow him with a believing eye through all the different ſcenes of his affliction—ſee him in the bigotted and diſdainful hall of the high-prieſt loaded with contumely! See him at the unrighteous tribunal of Pilate expoſed to the ſcoffs and indignities of

a furious populace, and, at laſt, delivered to the barbarity of a cruel executioner!—See him labouring up the hill of Calvary, and fainting under the weight of that croſs on which he was juſt about to be extended! —See his death aggravated by inhumanity and torture, and by all the ſhame that attends the laſt moments of the moſt abandoned malefactor! Admire that wonderful and divine patience which, throughout the whole ſeries of theſe awful tranſactions, he manifeſted under the hands of his betrayers and murderers, at the ſame time that his power could have cruſhed them to pieces. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again—As a lamb he was led to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb ſo he opened not his mouth.*

Then was it their *hour, and the power of darkneſs.* His beloved diſciples, diſmayed by the terrors of his fate, forſook him and fled. Inſulted and beaten, derided and ſcoffed, his head was torn by thorns that crowned him in cruel mockery, and his body by the direful ſcourge that lacerated all his fleſh. When indignity was exhauſted on his ſacred perſon, they drag him like a

felon to the accurſed tree. Transfixed with nails, and pierced with the impious and vengeful ſpear, he hung an agonizing victim on that dreadful altar. Liſten to the ſpirit of prophecy that in viſion deſcribes his ſufferings—"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midſt of my bowels."* "Many were aſtoniſhed at thee. His viſſage was ſo marred more than any man, and his form more than the ſons of men."† "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our ſorrows; yet" ſo dreadful and uncommon was his fate, that we could not regard it as the effect merely of the injuſtice and cruelty of *man*, "we did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of *God*, and afflicted."‡

What was viſible in his ſufferings was infinitely the ſmalleſt part. The anguiſh of dying in him aroſe, not from mangled limbs and tortured nerves, but from the ſenſe of the holy indignation of God againſt ſin. Although ſin was only imputed to him,

* Pſalm xxii. 14.
† Iſaiah lii. 14.
‡ Iſaiah liii. 5.

the puniſhment was real; for "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."* He felt not, indeed, thoſe remorſeful horrors that agitate and convulſe the conſcience of periſhing guilt; but the fires of divine juſtice, entering into his holy ſoul like a ſacrificing flame, conſumed it as a *whole burnt offering* for our tranſgreſſions. The fury of his inſulting enemies, the cruelty and ingenuity of torture he could have borne with ſerene and unſhaken conſtancy. But abandoned, at the period of his greateſt diſtreſs, by the conſolations of his Father's love, and made to drink the fearful cup of our iniquities, he was overwhelmed, he was utterly exhauſted, and ſeeming, for one terrible inſtant, to be ſinking in deſpair, he cried out "My God! My God! why haſt thou forſaken me!"† This dreadful cry was the conſummation of his ſufferings—the ſacrifice was now offered—juſtice had exacted its claims—the purchaſe of our ſalvation was completed—he "bowed his head" and ſaid "it is finiſhed."‡ Aſtoniſhing, and almoſt incredible efforts of divine love! In

* Iſaiah liii. 6.
† Matthew xxvii. 46.
‡ John xix. 20.

the moment in which he was about to engage in its tremendous conflicts he inſtituted this holy feſtival to call to the recollection of his faithful diſciples, to the moſt diſtant ages, his ſufferings, his ſacrifices, and the zeal for their ſalvation that conſumed him. Believers! can you review this ſcene, at once ſo awful, and ſo tender, without a thouſand ſolemn and intereſting recollections? Do you not feel your boſoms agitated with all the holy tumults of piety while you call to remembrance the affliction of theſe laſt moments—the tender compaſſion with which he looked upon his little and affectionate family whom he was about to leave—the fearful array of death with which he was encompaſſed—the agonies of the croſs—and, what the Son of God alone could endure, the ſuſpenſion of his Father's preſence, and the poſitive fires of his wrath againſt ſin, which drank up the ſoul of this divine victim! *Do this in remembrance of me!*

Theſe memorials of our bleſſed Lord ſerve to call to our remembrance not only his glorious character as the Meſſiah, the Sa-

viour of the world—and the ineſtimable teſtimonies of his love to mankind—but

III. In the third place, the important relations which he ſuſtains to us, and the holy ties that conſequently connect us with him.

It would be impoſſible, in the ſhort time that remains to us, even ſlightly to notice all the relations of Chriſt to his people which this ordinance may ſerve either directly, or remotely to bring to view. I ſhall dwell for a moment only on two—that of our teacher, and that of our Saviour. He was juſt cloſing a ſublime miniſtry by which he had eſtabliſhed a new diſpenſation of grace, and a more perfect law of holineſs among men—and he was now about to offer that glorious ſacrifice that conſummated the ſalvation of the world.

To form a juſt eſtimate of the high relation of Chriſt to his church as its teacher, the divine fountain of light and truth, we ſhould conſider the profound darkneſs that covered the earth before his appearance.—What groveling and fantaſtical idolatry—

what fenfeleſs ſuperſtition—what ignorance of the true God, and of all the duties which man owes to his creator—what ſenſuality, what proſtitutions diſgraced even their religious worſhip—what multiplied crimes polluted the nations! The traditions of the primitive religion had been loſt in the errors of ages—the lights of nature were extinguiſhed in the general corruption of mankind—the hope of a future exiſtence was well nigh obliterated from the human mind—the philoſophers rejected it as a pious viſion, and, in the popular religion, the doctrine was ſo diſguiſed by fiction that it wore the appearance of idle legend and romance. The diſciples, who had paſſed the early part of their life during that dark period before the ſun of righteouſneſs aroſe upon the world, muſt have liſtened with uncommon admiration and delight to *a teacher ſent from God*, who *brought life and immortality to light*, and taught them a ſyſtem of duty unknown to the reſt of the world, and at once ſo rational, and ſo ſublime. The moſt fervent ſentiments of duty muſt have attached them to this great maſter in Iſrael who diſpelled the ſhades of error and ignorance that had covered them, and ſhed the celeſtial light of

truth into their hearts. When they ſaw this heavenly ſun about to ſet, and, in their apprehenſions, going to be quenched in perpetual night, a profound grief ſettled upon their minds. From ſuch a teacher, and ſuch a friend they could not part without the deepeſt, and the tendereſt regrets. And whenever they renewed the memorials of ſo dear a maſter, they would recall, with gratitude, and delight, the charms of his divine leſſons to which they had ſo often liſtened with admiration.

But further, in eſtimating this relation of Chriſt as our teacher, let us conſider not only the errors of paganiſm which he chaſed from the world, but the eſſential weakneſs and blindneſs of the human mind with regard to thoſe doctrines, infinitely more important and intereſting than all others to mankind, that contain the knowledge of God, of a Saviour, of an immortal exiſtence, and of the eternal deſtinies of the righteous, and the wicked. On theſe ſubjects feeble and blind indeed is the reaſon of man when not enlightened from above. All his wiſdom is folly; and he can only loſe himſelf in wild conjecture, and anxious uncertain-

ty. How gloomy and diſconſolate would life be if we had no certain knowledge, derived from the father of lights, of our origin, our duties, and our deſtination! Jeſus, by opening Heaven to our view, and pointing out the way of ſalvation, hath ſhed on our condition in this world its richeſt conſolations. If we are truly ſenſible of the natural infirmity of the human mind, and the manifold errors to which it is prone, we will recognize with joy *the day ſpring from on high that hath viſited us, to give light to them that ſit in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.** In commemorating, therefore, this laſt act of the miniſtry of Chriſt upon earth, we will thankfully remember him who hath revealed to us the only living and true God, unknown to the Gentile nations—who hath enlightened before us the valley of the ſhadow of death, that land of darkneſs and of horrors to the guilty, and hath brought intimately home to the boſoms of his people the aſſured hopes of everlaſting life. Oh! bleſſed teacher! how little does the arrogance of human reaſon, or the thoughtleſſ-

* Luke i. 78, 79.

neſs of human folly underſtand the infinite obligations which we owe to thee! O light of the world! ſhine into our hearts! open them to receive the precious, the conſoling rays of divine truth! We remember, we adore thee who, ſeeming to be extinguiſhed forever in the darkneſs of thy laſt hour, didſt only veil thy glory for a moment in order to lift it again upon the world with greater ſplendor!

This ordinance ſerves, in the laſt place, to call to the remembrance of the ſincere communicant the moſt precious relation which he ſuſtains to us of our Saviour. For this end come he into the world, and for this end did he ſubmit to ſuffer, *that he might ſave his people from their ſins.* He is our Mediator, our Advocate with the Father, and the atonement for our tranſgreſſions. He holds in his hands the gifts of the holy-ſpirit, and the rewards of eternal life. How precious to a ſoul conſcious of her impurity, and lamenting her diſtance from God, is a divine interceſſor to lead her to his eternal throne, and to cover her imperfections before the preſence of his holineſs! With what tranſports of grati-

tude will ſhe look up from the brink of deſpair, to which ſhe had been urged by her crimes, to her bleſſed Redeemer who has all power in Heaven and on earth to ſave, and whoſe almighty merits have opened to her the gates of everlaſting peace!—In theſe intereſting relations does Jeſus appear at the head of his own table celebrating the myſtery of his own death. Believers! in theſe emblems behold your Saviour! The united views of repentance and of faith, of contrition and of hope will give an unſpeakable value to the memorials of our redemption. To Chriſt you owe all. In vain are altars and victims, *thouſands of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of oil to purchaſe heaven*—in vain the tears and anguiſh of the periſhing ſinner to obtain forgiveneſs—in vain are all the *works of righteouſneſs which we have done* to juſtify us before God. —His death is the perfect, the meritorious, the only ſacrifice for ſin, and the only title to ſalvation. How dear to you, then, will be theſe ſymbols and pledges of redeeming mercy that recall to your memory, by the livelieſt figures, a relation ſo precious and important.

Come then, my beloved brethren, diſciples of ſo dear, and ſo glorious a maſter, obey his laſt command, fulfil his dying requeſt. Can you, indeed, require the force of a command, or the authority of a requeſt, to urge you to the diſcharge of a delightful duty? Will you not preſs to your lips, and to your hearts the precious memorials of your heavenly friend? While you moiſten them with a tender grief for the unutterable afflictions by which his love was perfected,* will you not ſhed over them the tears of your gratitude for the ineſtimable bleſſings of which at that moment, he made you the heirs? Meditate on his amiable character, and his divine perfections—with a melancholy pleaſure retrace the unparallelled ſcenes of his laſt hour—indulge a holy and a lawful *tranſport* while you dwell on the ineffable proofs of his love, and liſten again to the leſſons of heavenly wiſdom that flow from his lips.

This holy table is likewiſe an altar on which you offer your fervent vows to your riſen and triumphant Redeemer who is now

* Hebrews ii. 10—59.

afcended far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named in Heaven and on earth, to hold for you the glorious inheritance which he purchafed with his blood.—Over thefe precious memorials, and with hearts glowing with the fentiments of duty and of zeal, you are called to profefs eternal fidelity to him who hath *loved us to the death*, and who now and *ever liveth to make interceffion for us*. Powerful is the authority of God which commands our obedience, but infinitely more powerful are the voluntary chains of love that hold us in his fervice. *The love of Chrift conftraineth us, becaufe we thus judge that, if one died for all then were all dead, and that he died for all that they who live fhould not henceforth live to themfelves but to him who died for them, and who rofe again.* Sweet are its conftraints; and from their fweetnefs arifes their force. Entering into the inmoft principles of the mind, and mingling, as it were, with all its eflence, they form a tie eternal as our being, and indiffoluble but with the foul itfelf. Approach this holy facrifice, therefore, to rekindle at it the facred fervours of divine love—to offer your pure vows to Heaven on the fame altar on which the Son of God

expired—and to confirm your resolutions of duty over the precious memorials of his death.

Finally, my brethren, estimate your sincerity in this holy duty, by the growing fruits of righteousness in your future life. Consecrate to the service of your Creator and Redeemer, all the powers of your hearts. And remember, that the memorials of your Saviour's love are likewise symbols of that fraternal love that should exist among all christians. As you *partake of one bread and drink of one cup*, so are you connected together by the most intimate unions. *See*, therefore, *that ye love one another with pure hearts fervently*. Let no injustice, selfishness, pride, or envy, pollute your intercourse, one with another—*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice*—Cultivate that heavenly wisdom that is *pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*—Let your mutual charity be remarked to your praise as it was to the praise of those first illustrious disciples who spread the glory of the cross along with its

pure and benevolent ſpirit, over the whole earth. Bleſſed Jeſus! while we *do this in remembrance of thee, ſhed abroad thy love in our hearts by the Holy-Ghoſt!*—breathe on us as thou didſt on thy beloved diſciples, that we may receive thy ſpirit!

AMEN!

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE UNITED INFLUENCE OF REFLECTION AND SACRED READING IN CULTIVATING AND PURIFYING THE MANNERS.

PSALM CXIX. 9.

Wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.

TO know wherein virtue conſiſts, and to underſtand the moſt effectual means of promoting it, were the principal objects of inquiry among the ancient ſages. In conformity with queſtions which, in that age, were commonly agitated among the wiſe and learned, the ſacred writer aſks, "Wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his way?"—What are the beſt means of cultivating a pious and virtuous habit of life? When he replies, "by taking heed thereto according to thy word," he ſtrongly inti-

mates that the holy ſcriptures contain the only certain rule, and the moſt powerful motives of duty. Reaſon is too vague and uncertain in its concluſions, and too feeble in its authority, either clearly to unfold the law of virtue, or to enforce obedience to its precepts. Philoſophy had, in vain, exerted its utmoſt powers in the ancient world to inſtruct, and reform mankind. But we find, in the ſacred writings, a doctrine moſt effectual for this end, and ſuperior to all the wiſdom of the ſchools, both for its evidence, and its authority.

This doctrine, applied by ſerious meditation to the regulation of our conduct, is the beſt mean of attaining that purity of manners, and that ſanctity of heart, which are the ornament of every age, and eſpecially of youth, and to attain which has ever been the great object of the wiſe and good.

The ſacred poet aſks this queſtion in the name of the young; probably, becauſe, at the time of compoſing this pſalm, he was himſelf young*; and becauſe, in this glow-

* Commentators ſuppoſe that this pſalm was written during his perſecution by Saul.

ing and inexperienced age, he felt, with peculiar force, the neceſſity of a divine wiſdom to direct its erring footſteps, and a divine power to controul and ſanctify its impetuous paſſions. It is of the utmoſt importance to train youth in the habits of piety and virtue, and to enable them early and wiſely to regulate their own conduct. For this end two principles are pointed out in the text as ſingularly uſeful—attentive conſideration of our ways—and careful ſtudy and application of the precepts and inſtructions of the holy ſcriptures—In other words, *ſelf-reflection—and reflection on the word of God.*

The illuſtration of theſe principles will form the ſubſtance of the following diſcourſe.

I. In the firſt place, ſelf-reflection is eſſential to the foundation of a virtuous life. Hence we learn both what to cultivate, and what to correct in our own hearts and conduct. Thoſe who are void of reflection neceſſarily become ſtrangers at home; and, as happens to men who never look into their affairs, their higheſt, and moſt momentous

intereſts are running into derangement, and they are haſtening to ruin without being ſenſible of their danger. A man without conſideration is a fool, ignorant of himſelf and his moſt important concerns—he is a wretch, the ſport of his own paſſions, or of the enticements of other ſinners—he is a madman who is ruſhing on deſtruction, and refuſes to open his eyes. What then is implied in *taking heed to our ways;* or, in that reflection on ourſelves and our own conduct which is recommended by the ſacred writer? It cannot imply leſs than a careful examination of the *principles*, and a ſerious attention to the *conſequences* of our actions as both are deſcribed and diſplayed in the word of God.

If men do not frequently inſpect their hearts, and ſearch the principles of their conduct, the corrupted fountain of nature will continue to flow impure. It is by cleanſing the ſpring that the ſtreams become healthful and clear. But if that ſource of unhallowed deſires and diſordered paſſions is kept covered up from view, and is never examined in order to be purified, will it not be continually breaking forth in ſenſual af-

fections, in criminal pleafures, in felfifh plans, in envy, malice, bitternefs, and wrath, in whatever alienates brethren from one another, or, in whatever only unites finners in the purfuit of crimes? The concealed heart increafes its foulnefs and corruptions by time. Examining its principles, and laying them open to view, is among the beft means of correcting them, and rendering them pure. Impurity cannot bear the inſpection of our own mind, nor the judgment of our conſcience. Corrupted as human nature is, ſin cannot be ſeen in its true colours without ſhame, nor beheld in its relation to the divine law without fear. Self-reflection is, therefore, a powerful principle of repentance and reformation.

Such inquiries faithfully conducted ſerve, not only to bring to light, and to condemn concealed vices, but to unmaſk falſe and pretended virtues. Frequently the faireſt actions are found to flow from motives that vitiate the whole. Hypocriſy may contaminate the moſt ſolemn acts of devotion—a regard merely to intereſt, or to reputation, may preſide over apparently the moſt laudable and honorable diſcharge of the duties

connected with our respective stations in life. Vain glory may become the principle of those humane and amiable virtues that, in their exercise command the applause of every beholder. Nay, mercenary aims, like a worm at the heart of the fairest fruit, may corrupt and canker even the noblest acts of beneficene and charity. It is only by scrutinizing and sifting our own character that we can separate the clean from the unclean, the pure from the vile, and place virtue on its true and evangelical foundations, the supreme love of God, and the sincere and equal love of our neighbour as ourselves.—The word of God forms the perfect, and the only test of the principles of our obedience. Every other is rendered imperfect by our ignorance, or uncertain by our self-love. According to its holy and unerring dictates, therefore, let us examine, and regulate our conduct. And, happily, it furnishes not only the rule, but the example of our virtue. In the room of every precept is the pattern set us by our Lord Jesus Christ. *Let the same spirit be in us which was also in him*—the same fervent zeal for the glory of God that consumed him—the same profound reverence for the divine presence that

impreſſed his mind—the ſame tranquil reſignation to the divine will that filled his heart—the ſame inextinguiſhable love for his brethren of the human race, for whom he was willing to make the ſacrifice of all things, and actually made the ſacrifice of his life—the ſame unſpotted purity in thought, word, and deed, that exempted him from every unholy and ſenſual influence—the ſame ſerene and conſtant view to the heavenly recompence of reward that elevated him above the world, and rendered him incapable of being ſoftened by its pleaſures, or diſmayed by its ſufferings. Such were the characters that adorned the life and converſation of our bleſſed Lord, and ſuch alſo ſhould diſtinguiſh his ſincere diſciples. *Wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.* By examining, in the firſt place, and regulating the principles of the heart—and,

In the next place, by a wiſe anticipation, and ſerious conſideration of the conſequences of his conduct. If men would look forward to the iſſue of ſin either as it is diſcloſed by experience, or as it is repreſented

in the infallible word of truth, little elſe would be neceſſary to reclaim the vicious, or to reſtrain their fooliſh and criminal purſuits. What youth, for example, would plunge into the gulph of intemperance and debauchery if, at the moment, he realized the ſolicitude, the anxiety, the diſeaſe and ſhame with which theſe vices ſhall be ſucceeded? Or thoſe diſgraceful ſcenes of folly and madneſs in which they will too probably end? When luſt impels, and its temptations invite, would he go, as too often he does, *like an ox to the ſlaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the ſtocks*, if he anticipated its diſguſts, its filthineſs, and riot—the habits of idleneſs and diſſipation in which it involves the profligate—the real inſignificance, and the contempt in their own eſtimation, and in that of the world, into which, at laſt, it almoſt inevitably ſinks them?

Pleaſure not yet taſted appears with untarniſhed charms, and conceals from our view the pains appointed by nature to ſucceed it. The paſſions and appetites gild all their objects as they advance. It is only from behind that their real deformity is ſeen.

And then, how often is the ſinner compelled to look back upon himſelf with compunction and reproach! How often tormented with painful and ineffectual wiſhes to be able to recall time, and to correct the errors of the paſt! Ah! time cannot be recalled—but it may be uſefully anticipated. What crimes, what miſeries, what public ſhame, what inward ſelf-reproach might not youth often avoid if, they would look forward to the unhappy fruits that muſt neceſſarily ſpring from a courſe of vice! If they would take pains to ſtrip the objects of the paſſions of thoſe deluſive charms which an inflamed imagination throws around them! If they would not precipitately abandon themſelves to the impulſes of riſing appetite, or the tranſports of inflamed deſire, but would pauſe to conſider the reflections which reaſon and conſcience will urge upon them when appetite is ſated, and all the conſequences of their folly are before their view! It is the inconſiderate purſuit of pleaſure, without looking forward to the cloſe of the ſcene that inſenſibly engages youth in the habits of vice. A comprehenſive view of life, and a prudent regard to conſequences, would reſtrain their indiſcretions,

or ſpeedily reclaim them from their errors. With what energy of language does the wiſeſt of men urge this argument on the young againſt intemperance and luſt? Speaking of the latter, he ſaith, "more bitter than death is the woman whoſe heart is ſnares and nets."* And of the former, he aſks, "Who hath woe? Who hath ſorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cauſe? Who hath redneſs of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine—they that go to ſeek mixed wine. Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itſelf aright—at the laſt, it biteth like a ſerpent, and ſtingeth like an adder"†

Although theſe conſiderations are important and ſerious, and on minds not loſt to prudence and honor, and juſt ſentiments of ſelf-reſpect, will be effectual to reſtrain the vicious tendencies of the heart; yet, the *word of God* teaches us to extend our views of the conſequences of actions beyond the preſent

* Eccles. vii. 26.

† Prov. xxiii. 29—32.

life, and to consider their relations to the life to come. This is the most interesting light in which our conduct can be regarded; and, on all men, it may, and ought to have the most powerful influence in regulating their morals, *and cleansing their way.* When we unite in one view our whole being, and consider the eternal retributions of mercy and of justice which, according to the scriptures, shall be made to the righteous and the wicked, what stronger motives can be urged to men to confirm in them the principles of duty, or to persuade them to repentance? Eternal, undescribable happiness and misery are placed before you. What an infinite advantage lies on the side of virtue and holiness, in opposition to all the transient pleasures of sin! How dearly purchased are its false and momentary enjoyments, if, the next moment, the sinner must lie down in unquenchable fire! "Oh! that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"* "Rejoice, O young man! in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth—walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes;

* Deut. xxxii. 29.

but, know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment!"* Oh! fatal termination of youthful follies! Let the awful denunciations of the word of God enter into thy heart—they cannot fail to produce in thee sincere amendment of life.

"Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." By this reply the sacred writer intends to recommend not only reflection on ourselves, and on the course and issue of our way—but

II. In the next place, a careful study and application of the word of God for the direction and government of our conduct.

Some rule for this purpose, either of philosophy, or of revelation, it behoves us to have. Some lights we require to instruct us in our duty—some law to regulate our actions—some effectual motives addressed to the heart, and fitted to engage our attention, and command our obedience. That luminous and perfect rule which the an-

* Eccles. xi. 9.

cient ſages purſued with ſuch laborious but heſitating ſteps in the dark, has been offered to us by the incarnate wiſdom of Heaven. And, if we compare the ſacred writings with what uninſpired reaſon is able to teach us on the ſubject of our duties and our hopes, or with what all the ſchools of philoſophy have ever taught, how ſuperior are they in value both as a law of life, and a mean of ſanctification.

I am not here to deſcant on all the excellencies of the ſacred writings—the ſublimity, and the divine perfection of their ſpirit—the lights which they have ſhed upon a benighted world—the conſolations which they have in ſtore for the miſerable—the mercies of Heaven which they reveal to the guilty. I mean ſimply to illuſtrate their ſuperior excellency above every other law that men have diſcovered or invented, for cleanſing the heart, and regulating the life.—It conſiſts

In their purity—in their authority—and in the ſublime and powerful motives which they addreſs to the human heart in order to lead it to piety and virtue.

In the firſt place, in their purity.

Their ſpirit, and their tendency is to promote perfect ſanctity of manners.—Whatever flows from human reaſon alone will be mingled with human corruption, and tainted by it. Accordingly, in all the ſyſtems of morals that have been framed by philoſophers either ancient or modern, we find a tincture of the character of the author—ſome principle that favours vice—ſome that juſtifies or excuſes frailty. We may commonly determine the ruling paſſion of the writer from the ſpirit of his work. But in the divine word we diſcern a purity worthy the holineſs of him who ſpeaks. The ſpirit of God knows no accommodation with ſin, or with frailty. He leaves even no ambiguities in the truth behind which the vices of men may find a protection. All is plain, ſimple, and moſt holy. But the word of Chriſt aims not at regulating the outward conduct merely, but enters into the heart, and ſanctifies the ſource of our habits and manners. "Except a man be born again, ſaith the Saviour, he cannot ſee the king-

dom of God."* No incenſe can be acceptable on his altar but the incenſe of a pure heart—no ſtreams can be pure that do not flow from a pure fountain—no actions can be approved that do not ſpring from a holy principle. The holy ſcriptures cleanſe the life by cleanſing its inward fountains. A mind illuminated by the word and ſpirit of God, and a heart renewed in all its principles and affections by his grace, will aſpire to higher degrees of virtue than were cultivated by the ſages of the world who were contented with being merely citizens. They will aim at a celeſtial purity accommodated to that mature, and perfect ſtate of being in the Heavens, of which the preſent life is only the infancy, and the preparatory diſcipline.

The word of God acquires great value and efficacy as a law of holineſs, in the next place, from its high authority.

* John iii. 3.—A principle like this was maintained likewiſe in many of the ancient ſchools; and that change of temper and habits which philoſophy aimed to produce in its diſciples was ſtiled *regeneration*. But, in ſpirit and meaning, the doctrine of the ſchools was far inferior to the doctrine of Chriſt.

Extremely feeble, in the bulk of mankind, are the dictates of reaſon as a rule of duty. On many ſubjects it is dubious and heſitating in its deciſions—on many it is eaſily corrupted and biaſſed by the heart—on all, its concluſions, purſued through a train of deductions which grow leſs evident at every ſtep, ſtrike with little force upon the mind wherever they are oppoſed by the vices and paſſions of men. Were they clearer than they are, reaſon is too weak to make them obeyed. Of its weakneſs let me produce a familiar and acknowledged example. Although the principles of juſtice, that form the baſis of ſociety, are among the moſt evident of its concluſions, is that evidence alone ſufficient to procure ſubmiſſion to its rules? Would the maſs of men, become good citizens, if they were ſubject to no other controul than the lights of their own minds? What diſorders, what crimes would diſtract the ſtate, if their own reaſon were their ſole law, and their ſole judge! And would they, if they were obedient to no higher authority, become good citizens of that heavenly country whoſe duties are infinitely more complicated and pure? What, alas! would be their ſyſtem of reli-

gion? What their law of duty? What the ſanctions that would give efficacy to that law, if they were left to derive them all from the feeble lights of their own minds? Obſcure, imperfect, and impotent. No, we require revelation to render duty certain, and we require the awful authority of God to give it its full energy upon the heart.

Man was formed to be governed chiefly by authority, in order to promote and ſecure his virtue. His firſt opinions and actions are ſubjected to the wiſdom and controul of parents—his early years to the inſtructions and diſcipline of teachers. The moſt reaſonable laws of ſociety require to be enjoined by a power ſuperior to his individual will: and the wiſeſt legiſlators have found it neceſſary to call in the force of religion to ſtrengthen the bands of ſocial order, and to give complete and efficient energy to their laws. But what is the veneration and obedience which we owe to the moſt revered and beloved of parents—to the moſt wiſe and powerful rulers of the world—to the preceptors that have enlightened our early years—or to the maſters of ſcience that govern the opinions of the age,

compared with that which is due to the eternal Spirit of Truth who hath enlightened the law of our duty? To the facred and awful authority of the Creator and Judge of the univerſe, added to that law to give it an effectual impreſſion on the heart? The Chriſtian, the believer in divine revelation enjoys infinitely more powerful means of virtue than others who depend only on themſelves, or who attempt to follow the erring and contradictory lights every where held out to them by a falſe philoſophy.—When I hold in my hand the ſacred volume, I ſeem to hear the voice of an affectionate parent who, by requiring perfect holineſs, has no other end in view but my ſupreme felicity—I ſeem to liſten to the dictates of unerring truth—I ſeem to receive the commands of a divine lawgiver who has all power in Heaven and on earth to ſave or to deſtroy—I ſeem to read the decrees of that holy and omniſcient Judge from whom I ſhall ſhortly receive my everlaſting deſtiny. What an awful, what a ſublime, and ſacred authority does the word of God poſſeſs! Both youth and age will find in the ſtudy of its divine precepts the happieſt inſtitution for *cleanſing their way*, and

cultivating in them the habits of virtue. Let it be your *meditation all the day*—Let its pure and ſacred truths be ever before your eyes—Walk in its heavenly light—And, let it be your guide to the eternal ſource of light and perfection.

Its influence in ſanctifying the heart may be eſtimated likewiſe, from the high and intereſting motives which it propoſes to mankind to reclaim them from vice, and to lead them to virtue. The motives that principally deſerve our conſideration on this ſubject, not only for their ſuperior force, but becauſe they chiefly diſtinguiſh the goſpel from every other moral inſtitution, are the retributions of divine juſtice to the virtuous and the vicious in a future ſtate of exiſtence —and the infinite mercy of God in the redemption of the world.

Philoſophy, in inviting her diſciples to virtue can propoſe to them only the preſent peace, reputation, or intereſt that attends it; motives which religion enjoys in common with her, and enjoys in a much higher degree. She cannot look into eternity, or ſhe looks into that profound abyſs with a

feeble and unſteady eye, incapable of diſtinguiſhing any object. If a few men of elevated virtue, and warm imagination, like Cicero and Plato, entertained a faint hope of exiſting after the preſent life, the greater part of philoſophers, unable to ſee any thing certain beyond the grave, believed that, at death, they ſhould ceaſe to be. This principle diſſolved at once the ſtrongeſt ties of moral obligation.* It is the ſingular glory of the goſpel that in it life and immortality are offered to the hopes of the pious. In it, likewiſe, is denounced the moſt fearful deſtiny to the wicked and impenitent. It hath ſcattered the dark, impenetrable cloud that hung on the hour of death. It hath rendered the future certain as the preſent, and hath drawn from eternity motives the moſt ſublime to animate and ſtrengthen their virtue,

* When we read the dubious diſcuſſions concerning a future ſtate which took place in the Roman ſenate, in which was aſſembled all the wiſdom and learning of the capital of the world, at the time when they were about to determine on the fate of Cataline and his aſſociates, we are irreſiſtibly lead to deplore the blindneſs and infirmity of the human mind unenlighted by divine revelation. What motives in aid of virtue were they able to draw from that ſtate which they knew not whether to believe or diſbelieve, but were moſt inclined to deny?—Sall. de bel. catalin. Speeches of Cæſar, Cato, &c.

and the moſt awful to diſcourage and reſtrain vice. What can be more awful, or ſtrike the conſcience of guilt with deeper, or more ſalutary fear, than the tribunal of juſtice—than that day wherein God hath appointed to judge the ſecrets of all men by Jeſus Chriſt—than the decree by which the guilty ſhall be conſigned to ſuffer the *vengeance of eternal fire?*—Arreſt thy ſtep O profligate youth! In the act of vice pauſe, and look before thee! Behold the tribunal—the judge—the chains of death—the priſons where the wicked *dwell with everlaſting burnings!* Wilt thou, in the intoxication of thy paſſions brave the terrors of almighty wrath? Are not theſe views ſufficient to palſy all the powers of ſin?—Perhaps thou wilt ſay—it has been often ſaid—forbear theſe repreſentations. No man was ever made virtuous by fear alone. But, is it not the firſt ſtep to virtue to *break off our ſins* by repentance? Are not the ſalutary reſtraints of fear neceſſary, in the greater part of men, to prepare the heart for the admiſſion of higher and purer principles?*

* The good influence which the apprehenſions of a future judgment, and the puniſhment of the wicked, even in the imperfect manner in which they were conceived by paganiſm,

On the other hand, direct thy view to the glorious hope which is propoſed in the goſpel to animate the good man in the diſcharge of his duty, and encourage his progreſs towards perfection. Not the uncertain hope which the prince of Roman philoſophers neither could conſent to reſign, nor was able firmly to hold.* Not the faint and doubtful ray that gleamed on the evening of Socrates and gilded to him for a moment the clouds of death;† but the full aſſurance of faith—the clear and un-

were ſuppoſed, by the beſt men of antiquity, to have upon morals, may be underſtood by a remark of Polybius—Book VI. Speaking of the Greeks who, in that age, had been corrupted by the Epicurean Philoſophy, he ſays "If you lend a talent to a Greek, and bind him to the repayment by ten engagements, with as many ſecurities, and witneſſes, it is impoſſible to make him regard his word. Whereas, among the Romans, they are always punctual to the oaths they have taken For which reaſon the apprehenſions of infernal torments were wiſely eſtabliſhed; and now to oppoſe them is wholly irrational."

* Cicero, reaſoning on the ſubject of immortality with that doubtfulneſs that muſt neceſſarily accompany all our concluſions on this ſubject that are not derived from revelation, inclines, however, to the probability of a future and happy exiſtence for good men. He adds that this expectation is a ſource of ſo much conſolation to him, that, if he is in an error in indulging it, he does not wiſh to be undeceived.

† The hope expreſſed by Socrates to his friends who came to viſit him on the day on which he died, and the doubtful manner in which he uttered it, are well known to every perſon acquainted with ancient hiſtory.

clouded light of the Son of Righteouſneſs. —Bleſſed and triumphant aſſurance! What is this momentary and corruptible exiſtence, compared with that eternal being that ſhall ſhine as the ſtars in Heaven for ever and ever? What are theſe feeble and groſs ſenſations of pleaſure by which we are allied to the beaſts that periſh, compared with thoſe divine and immortal powers of enjoyment, by which we ſhall reſemble the angels that ſurround the throne, and, in ſome meaſure approximate towards God himſelf? Theſe glorious rewards of piety and faith, of truth and virtue, are among the moſt powerful, as well as the moſt ſublime motives to a pure and holy life. Such elevated and immortal hopes tend to raiſe the affections above the groſs and corrupting influence of the world. They tend to quench the flames of luſt, to extinguiſh the rude and wrathful paſſions, and to cultivate in the heart, that *holineſs without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* Can ſenſuality debaſe the ſoul that expects to approach the throne of God, and to dwell forever in his preſence? Can power oppreſs thoſe whom it hopes to meet as brethren and equals in the kingdom above? Can envy, hatred or revenge, rankle in the boſoms

of thoſe who aſpire to the ſociety of the bleſſed in Heaven among whom reigns only a pure and eternal love?—Are the preſent rapid moments of our probation, ſtamping their impreſſion upon our everlaſting deſtiny? Is every inſtant preparing for us new flames below, or new ſcenes of felicity and honor above? What diligence and fervency ſhould theſe conſiderations add to every act of duty! Will ſincere piety raiſe a worm of duſt to immortal glory? How holy ought we to be in all manner of life and converſation!

Finally, religion propoſes to us ſtrong additional motives to duty, drawn from the mercy of God in the redemption of the world. They merit an ample illuſtration, but I can only glance at them in the moſt haſty manner.

On this ſubject, reaſon and philoſophy afford us no aid. The goſpel alone is able to point out the way in which ſinners can have acceſs to their Maker and their judge offended by their crimes, and conſtrained, if I may ſpeak ſo, by the perfection of his nature, to puniſh their guilt. It reveals to us

the love of God in the richeſt and moſt aſtoniſhing act of mercy that was ever diſplayed to the univerſe.—Could I draw aſide the veil from the dreadful picture of human guilt, or preſent to your view the catalogue of our innumerable crimes, I might convey ſome idea of the infinite grace that was pleaſed to forego the rights of his juſtice on man, and to divert its awful thunders to the head of his beloved Son. Could I pluck off the covering from Hell, and diſcloſe its tremendous priſons, the deſtined abodes of the guilty—could I unfold the gates of Heaven and pour upon your ſight the effulgence of that glory *that eye hath not ſeen, neither hath ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive*, but which is reſerved for thoſe who are redeemed by the precious blood of Chriſt, I might enable you to conceive the boundleſs obligations impoſed upon us by his love.

But the moſt illuſtrious proof of his love is ſeen in himſelf—in his birth—in his life—and, above all, in his death, when *he bore our ſins in his own body on the tree.*——Young man!—O young man, immerſed in plea-

ſure! devoted to thy own enjoyments! forgetful of thy Creator, and thy duty! Look on the Saviour of the world! Can there be a more powerful and perſuaſive argument to repentance than the love of him *who hath loved thee to the death?* Look on the cruel altar of the croſs on which he was made a victim for thoſe ſins by which thou art profaning his love! In the view of thoſe bitter ſufferings he endured for thee, can'ſt thou repeat the crimes for which he died! —Hear the voice of divine mercy calling to thee from the Heavens! Liſten to the intereſting voice that it utters from the croſs! Hear the cry of that precious blood that ſtreams from his ſide, and, calling from the earth, *ſpeaketh better things than the blood of Abel!* Ah! what motives can touch thee if thou art inſenſible to theſe? What perſuaſions can reach the hardneſs of age if theſe are ineffectual on the tenderneſs and ſuſceptibility of youth! The whole compaſs of nature cannot furniſh arguments to duty, or admonitions againſt ſin equally intereſting and ſtrong.—*Wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

Having trespassed already on your time, I shall circumscribe within a narrow compass the single reflection with which I design to conclude this discourse.

The subject, to the illustration of which you have attended, recommends to your most diligent study, and your most affectionate esteem this sacred volume from which we derive truths of the highest importance to the tranquility of our own breasts, to the peace and order of society, to the dignity and perfection of human nature, and to our eternal happiness. I speak of it now as containing something more than the most perfect rule of virtue that was ever delivered to the world—I speak of it as embracing the richest treasures of our knowledge, and the noblest sources of our consolation. If we consider the dubious and discordant sentiments of human reason with regard to the existence and perfections of the deity—the means by which the guilty may obtain the forgiveness of sins—the law of our duty—the nature and the certainty of another and a better life, how precious to us should be this system of holy inspiration that resolves these afflicting doubts, and sheds a divine

and satisfactory evidence on subjects the most interesting that can be offered to the reflections, or the hopes of mankind! A fanatical spirit of impiety under the abused name of philosophy has risen up perversely and presumptuously to call in question truths so sacred and consolatory to miserable mortals. Pert and false wit, ignorant youth, and, in an age in which no extravagance is strange, even coarse and illiterate debauchery, venture to hold in derision the belief, the hope, and consolation of the best and wisest men who have ever lived. Christians! in proportion to the madness and folly that are desperate enough to set at naught *the power and the wisdom of God*, should be your adherence to that divine word in which they are so gloriously displayed. How blind and erring would be our footsteps through life if they were not directed by divine truth! What a profound and fearful darkness would rest upon the grave if we were not enabled, by this heavenly light, to penetrate beyond it to a blessed immortality! Let the sacred scriptures, therefore, be the subject of our daily and pious meditation. Let not the cavils of ignorant men, nor the insults of fools

tear from our bosoms these precious lights of duty, and treasures of our hopes.

If you seek wisdom, draw it from these divine fountains—if you cultivate virtue, here you find its perfect law—if you would attain to immortal felicity and glory, from them you imbibe the spirit of Heaven.

O young man! take heed to thy ways according to his holy word. Seek not for companions whose example will encourage thee in vice—whose study it is to prevent reflection, or to furnish to reflection only false and criminal principles to defend a criminal practice. Let not thy passions govern thee in this ardent and inconsiderate period of life, when they require to be kept under a continual rein—let not pleasure intoxicate thee, and impose her illusions on thy reason for truth—hunt not after those pernicious writers whose object it is to inflame the imagination and corrupt the heart. *Take heed to thy way*—pause in thy course—deliberate—reflect. Examine and weigh thy principles. Bring thy conduct to the test of the divine law. Never wilt thou be prepared for the pure mansions of Heaven

till thy virtue, or to ſpeak a language more conformable to the goſpel, till thy holineſs of heart and life, has reached the perfection of this ſtandard.

O God! in thy mercy arreſt the profligacy of this age! Make thy word quick and powerful! Let it penetrate with deep and effectual conviction the conſcience of ſecure guilt, and deſtroy thoſe deceitful maxims which the hearts of ſinners frame only to juſtify their crimes! Let it triumph over the pernicious principles of a falſe philoſophy, the offspring of our degenerate manners!

AMEN!

DISCOURSE IX.

THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

FIRST DICOURSE—THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE DUTY.

LUKE VI. 37.

Forgive, and you ſhall be forgiven.

IF you love them that love you, ſaith the Saviour, what reward have you ?"* There is a natural propenſity in the human heart to requite with kindneſs the favors we have received, and to ſympathize with the pleaſures and the pains of thoſe with whom we are connected by friendſhip and eſteem. "But I ſay unto you, love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you."† This is the ſublime of charity. Pride, re-

* Matt. v. 46.
† Matt. v. 44. Luke vi. 28.

ſentment, and all the moſt violent emotions of the breaſt are ready to riſe againſt thoſe who have treated us with injuſtice, cruelty, or ſcorn. When a good man is enabled to forgive the malignity of his enemies, much more will he be diſpoſed to diſcharge all other offices of benevolence and humanity towards the reſt of mankind.

This virtue has juſtly been ſaid to be peculiar to the chriſtian ſyſtem. For, although there are illuſtrious examples of moderation, and forbearance among the great men of pagan antiquity, which approach to the meekneſs and ſelf-denial of apoſtles and martyrs, yet are they rare; and the philoſophers in general, who ſtudied to cultivate this virtue, aimed rather at the contempt than the forgiveneſs of injuries—at a ſuperiority of ſoul that ſoared above their enemies, than at that meekneſs and charity that ſtoops to embrace them with fraternal affection. But whatever approaches a few of the diſciples of reaſon have made towards a doctrine and a practice ſo ſublime and holy, ſhe had, plainly, not authority ſufficient to impoſe it on the pride, and the paſſions of mankind as an univerſal law of

duty. This was the office of a divine legiſlator—of the *teacher ſent from God.* And, among the many precepts that raiſe his goſpel far above all other ſyſtems of morals or religion that have appeared in the world, that of the forgiveneſs of injuries, holds a diſtinguiſhed place. He has enforced it, likewiſe, by the higheſt ſanction—"For, if ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your father who is in Heaven forgive your treſpaſſes."*

The revengeful and the proud are apt to regard this virtue in two oppoſite lights, either as a perfection above human nature, or as a meanneſs below it—as implying an elevation of mind and ſelf-command almoſt divine, or manifeſting a puſillanimity unworthy of man. Theſe ideas, I truſt, will appear in the progreſs of this ſubject, to be equally groundleſs, in which I ſhall

I. Point out the extent of the duty—and

II. Illuſtrate its excellence and reaſonableneſs as a principle of conduct.

* Matt. vi. 15.

I. This duty conſiſts in loving our enemies—in refraining from every purpoſe of revenge towards them—in readineſs to return them kindneſs for injuſtice—and, finally, in a diſpoſition to ſeek every prudent and practicable mean of reconciliation with them.

1. No offence can cancel the original obligation that lies upon all men to love one another. Sprung from the ſame ſource—children of one Father who is in heaven—partakers of a common nature—fellow travellers through a dangerous and painful pilgrimage—and heirs of the ſame immortal hopes, man is connected with man by the ſtrongeſt and the deareſt ties. Although your enemy has broken through thoſe ties, it forms no warrant for you to aſſiſt his folly or his madneſs in tearing them aſunder. Charity requires us to diſtinguiſh between a man and his actions: and, even when theſe are moſt cenſurable and offenſive, to remember that the offender is ſtill a brother. This principle is the vital ſpirit of the chriſtian religion as it reſpects our intercourſe with mankind, and is the great cement of the univerſal family of God.

2. As religion requires us to embrace our enemy with benevolence as he is a man, much more does it prohibit towards him every purpoſe of revenge. Hardly need I ſpeak here of thoſe cruel paſſions that diſturb ſociety by the moſt atrocious acts.—Hardly need I call to mind thoſe enormities that ſometimes flow from pride, from envy, from hatred and rage—thoſe furious wranglings, thoſe bloody conteſts—thoſe ſhameful means of private vengeance in which, men, giving themſelves up to the violent impulſe of their feelings, inſtead of calmly ſeeking juſtice from the authoriſed tribunals of their country, conſtitute themſelves at once judges and executioners in their own cauſe. Againſt atrocities of this kind I may appeal, not only to the mild and benevolent ſpirit of the goſpel, but to the common ſentiments of mankind.

There are other ways leſs flagrant, and that outrage leſs the divine ſpirit of charity, by which a revengeful temper may manifeſt itſelf. Although there are caſes in which even the meekneſs of chriſtianity will permit a good man to demand his rights in the ſeats of public juſtice; yet, if you harraſs your

brother by vexatious ſuits—Nay, if you proſecute your moſt juſt and equitable claims againſt him with bitterneſs and animoſity—if it is not ſufficient for you to obtain redreſs, unleſs you can alſo make him the victim of the laws, you violate the law of Chriſt. This holy and benevolent law requires meekneſs and moderation in all our conduct towards men, and that we ſhould rather ſuffer wrong in matters of inferior moment than ſeem contentious, or too rigidly exact even our undoubted rights. "If thine adverſary ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo. If he ſmite thee on one cheek turn to him the other. If he compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain."*

Revenge may be ſeen in the ſocial and eaſy hours of converſation, in acts in which it is hardly ſuſpected. The aſperity of your expreſſions betrays it—it appears in

* Mat. v. 39, 40, 41. Theſe are not abſolute precepts. They were proverbial ſayings among the Jews, which are never to be interpreted with rigor. They were intended to recommend forbearance to men, and rather to ſuffer ſmall injuries, and yield their rights in matters of inferior concern, than to contend with the obſtinate and ſelfiſh.

thoſe eternal complaints of wrongs intended to excite againſt your enemy the indignation of the world—in thoſe odious or ridiculous pictures which you draw of his vices or his foibles—in your readineſs to hear and to circulate every malicious tale againſt him which calumny has invented. If you do not actually detract from his deſerved praiſe, do you hear it done by others, with a ſecret pleaſure? If you hear his worth approved, are you ready to load it with exceptions, and ſuſpicions? Or do you, by a certain affected reſerve and caution expreſs more than you could ſay? An unholy reſentment may be diſcerned in the moſt guarded modes of converſation. It may be perceived even in that ſilence with which a prudent enemy thinks to veil his heart. Would you once have obſerved, with regard to that perſon, the ſame caution? Is it not a ſenſe of injury that has changed in your eſtimation his good qualities? Or, if you cannot but ſtill diſcern them, is it not a ſecret reſentment that palſies your tongue, and ſeals up your lips? Ah! in how many forms of decency, and of virtue even, may this vice lie concealed.

3. True forgiveneſs implies a diſpoſition to return kindneſs for injury. "Bleſs thoſe who curſe you, ſaith the meek and benevolent Saviour of men, do good to thoſe who hate you." That ſweetneſs of temper that is ready to pour its ſecret bleſſing on the head of an offender, is a principle allied to Heaven, and peculiarly fitted to prepare the heart to enter, and enjoy thoſe regions of love. It flows from that divine charity that regards all men as the children of our heavenly Father, and an offender only as a miſtaken brother. "If thine enemy hunger, ſaith the apoſtle, feed him, if he thirſt, give him drink: for, in ſo doing thou ſhalt heap coals of fire on his head."* Such proofs of your goodneſs, and your innocence with regard to him, will melt him in ingenuous ſorrow for his precipitancy and injuſtice, or pierce him with deſerved compunction at the view of your ſuperior worth. This was probably the meaning of an ancient philoſopher† who, when he was aſked by what means a man might be revenged on his enemy, anſwered "by being better than he."

* Rom. xii. 20.
† Diogenes.

If there be a way in which you can render him a valuable ſervice by ſpeaking well of the deſerving parts of his character, by drawing a diſcreet veil over his foibles, by generouſly producing his virtues to light, or by advancing his fortunes, you will not only fulfil an elevated duty of religion, but probably attach him to you hereafter as an uſeful friend.

This precious law of chriſtianity is violated, then, whenever you neglect to render him thoſe ſervices which he needs, and which are in your power to beſtow. Is there a reſpectable office which would be uſeful to him, and which he is better qualified than another to fill? Is there a profitable employment for his induſtry which it may depend upon your influence to obtain? Yet, do you exert that influence againſt him only becauſe you have been offended? Although you enter into no intrigues, and form no plans againſt him, yet, in the deciſive moment of accompliſhing or defeating his hopes, and when all may reſt upon you, do you oppoſe him? Nay, although you do not oppoſe him, do you, through coldneſs and alienation neglect him,

and let him ſee that his intereſts form none of your concern? I ſee, the world ſees in theſe acts, the proofs of a reſentful and unforgiving ſpirit.—Do you hear his character, more precious than wealth or honor, defamed, when you poſſeſs the means of vindicating it? Do you promote the calumny? Do you, by meaning looks and geſtures, give ſignificance to ſuſpicion? Do you even, by a cruel ſilence, aſſiſt the deſigns of his enemies, and enjoy the ſlander? Do you rejoice in his unmerited calamities? Or, if he has been culpable, do you triumph in his detection and ſhame? Alas! are not theſe the characters of an enemy? If you do not pity his misfortunes, defend, where you can, his good name, aid his lawful hopes, and even forget that he has injured you, you have not ſincerely forgiven him, nor fulfilled the ſacred law of charity that requires us to render good for evil.

4. In the laſt place, this duty implies a diſpoſition to ſeek every prudent mean of reconciliation with thoſe between whom and us have ariſen any cauſes of offence. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there

remember that thy brother hath aught againſt thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go, firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."* No worſhip can be pure that is ſtained with angry and reſentful paſſions—No prayer can find admiſſion to the throne of grace, while injuſtice pollutes the conſcience, or malice rankles in the breaſt. A ſincere chriſtian, who poſſeſſes the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit, will be grieved if, at any time, he has given even involuntary offence; and if, through prejudice, or the ſurpriſe of paſſion, he hath, by word or deed, occaſioned an injury to his brother, he will be ſolicitous to repair the wrong. He will not diſdain to make thoſe neceſſary explanations, or even thoſe conceſſions which may be requiſite to place their harmony upon its firſt footing, and to cement it, if poſſible, with new endearments. Nay, where a brother is to be gained, he will not too rigorouſly examine his own rights, but will diſplay a certain generoſity in his advances, the dictate of a benevolent heart, conſcious of the pureſt intentions.

* Mat. v. 23—24.

This ſubject may be farther illuſtrated by pointing out the falſe principles upon which reconciliations often proceed, or the miſtaken ſubſtitutes that are put in the room of the ſincere forgiveneſs of injuries.

1. Parties at variance we ſometimes ſee brought together by the addreſs and management of common friends. To their inſtances at length they yield. But, obſerve with what reluctance they meet—what mutual coldneſs and diſtruſt they betray at every ſtep—how many explanations muſt be made—how many punctilios muſt be adjuſted—how many compromiſes muſt be attempted, in order to ſave a falſe ſentiment of honor? Do you believe that you have fulfilled the celeſtial law of charity by a reconciliation that has proceeded upon theſe grounds? No—even the world is not deceived. It ſees that you are not friends. It perceives in your converſation, in your conduct, in your whole manner, the coldneſs of your hearts.

2. Men ſometimes miſtake the mere ſubſiding of the paſſions which is the effect of time, for the forgiveneſs of injuries which is

the fruit of charity. The edge of their reſentments is blunted, and they ſink down by degrees, and almoſt without deſign, into the ordinary offices of good neighborhood.—In the various and capricious changes of the world, an accidental concurrence of intereſts ſometimes re-unites thoſe whom difference of intereſt had divided. But theſe principles have nothing in them in common with the generous warmth and kindneſs of the chriſtian temper. The ſpirit of the bleſſed Jeſus regards a forgiven enemy like a brother reconciled: and an enemy who refuſes to be reconciled it regards with thoſe ſentiments of meekneſs and benediction that can flow only from a heart touched and animated with the love of God.

3. Not infrequently, a cold return to the external civilities of ſociety is miſtaken for the duty I am recommending, while you ſtill cheriſh a keen remembrance of injuries you have received.—*I forgive him,* you ſay, *but I do not forget. He has no reaſon hereafter to rely on my friendſhip.* Ah! this hint is too ſignificant. We diſcern in it a rankled and wounded mind. Does the mild temper of the goſpel thus ſwell the breaſt

with a proud reſentment? No—it tends to unite the hearts of men by the ſweet and attractive ſympathies of charity, and not merely to connect their perſons by the looſe and vulgar ties of ordinary aſſociation. The civilities practiſed by a good man are the ſincere expreſſions of a benevolent mind, not a hypocritical maſk intended to veil from the world paſſions which he is aſhamed to avow. Conſcious that God inſpects his heart, he ſtudies not to cover diſpoſitions there which he is not willing to expoſe to the pure and holy light of heaven, and which will not aſſimilate him to its bleſſed ſociety.

4. Prudence is frequently ſubſtituted for charity. Men ſmother their reſentments merely to prevent the derangement which they would produce in the circle of their ſociety, or to eſcape the uneaſineſs that muſt ariſe to themſelves from a perpetual courſe of hoſtilities.

5. But the laſt ſubſtitute which I ſhall mention, for the forgiveneſs is the contempt of injuries.—Well may innocence feel its ſuperiority to the indiſcretion of unfriendly

tongues, and the malignity of evil intentions. And the calm dignity of virtue is conſiſtent with the gentleneſs and meekneſs that become a chriſtian. But contempt, involving, as it too often does, the offender with the offence, is an unholy temper. It indicates a pride, and haughtineſs of mind incompatible, equally with the charity, and the humility of the goſpel. Vice, when conſidered as offering its temptations to us, may, by a noble mind, be regarded with contempt—when ſeen in the conduct of others, it ought rather, by a good man, to be beheld with pity.

Reſerving for another diſcourſe the illuſtration of the excellence and reaſonableneſs of this diſpoſition as a general principle of conduct, I ſhall conclude the preſent with a ſingle and brief reflection.

The forgiveneſs of injuries is inculcated throughout the diſcourſes of our bleſſed Lord and his apoſtles with peculiar frequency and earneſtneſs. For, it is not only the higheſt exerciſe of that charity which they lay at the foundation of all our duties to mankind; but it is abſolutely neceſſary to

the peace of the world, to extinguiſh, or prevent the action of thoſe innumerable cauſes of diſſention that are continually ſpringing up in human ſociety. Did every man conceive himſelf entitled to avenge his own quarrels it would convert the world into a theatre of violence and blood. In order to prevent this fatal effect, the wiſe, the moderate, and the good are called, not only to abſtain from doing injury, but daily to cover with the mantle of forgiveneſs the injuries that are offered to them. Injuſtice, fraud, envy, malice, wrath, whiſpering, tattling, ſlander would keep the world in a perpetual flame, and fix our own peace forever on the rack, were not their influence counteracted by this exalted principle of charity. But, when we conſider, on one hand, the force of the paſſions, and, on the other, the infirmity of the mind, may we not exclaim with the apoſtle, on a different occaſion, "who is ſufficient for theſe things?" To forgive like a chriſtian ſeems to require both a greatneſs and humility of mind, a meekneſs and equanimity of temper almoſt beyond the preſent frail condition of human nature. But, we may reply, with the ſame apoſtle, "I can do all things through Chriſt who

ſtrengtheneth me." Let this high and arduous duty, therefore, be the ſubject of our fervent and continual petitions at the throne of grace. The great Teacher of the church hath incorporated it in that excellent and comprehenſive prayer which he hath left to be the perpetual rule of our devotions. Frequently, indeed, it requires all the energy of prayer, to calm and ſubdue the tempeſt of our paſſions—It requires that profound ſenſe of the divine preſence which is cultivated in prayer to impoſe upon their fury an effectual curb—It requires all the humility of penitents proſtrate at the footſtool of mercy to repreſs in the heart that obdurate and unhallowed pride which is the chief ſupport of our unforgiving reſentments.

Finally, this duty forms one of the beſt teſts of the heart. Men may more eaſily deceive themſelves with regard to the general duties which they owe either to God, or to mankind. But if you can bear injuries with patience—if you can maintain a mild and amiable ſerenity under reproach and calumny—if you can forgive offences moſt deliberately committed againſt you,

and return kindneſs for injuſtice, and *bleſſing for railing*, it is the higheſt evidence of the complete ſubjection of the paſſions to the government of reaſon, and of the dominion of that principle of divine love in the heart which is the true foundation, and the animating ſpirit of every duty.—I do not aſk if you are without paſſions? nor if they are not naturally quick and ſtrong? Theſe may be found in the beſt and nobleſt characters—but, if the power of religion has been able to ſubdue them, and to hold them under its ſoft and gentle rein? If, like Chriſt on the agitated and ſtormy lake, it has been able to calm them, and to ſay to the winds and the waves, peace! be ſtill!—This is a ſolid ground on which you may reſt your hopes before the throne of eternal mercy "for, if you forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you."

Teach us, O Lord! to underſtand, and enable us to fulfil this ſublime duty, the ornament of the goſpel, the perfection of man!

AMEN!

DISCOURSE X.

THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

SECOND DICOURSE—THE EXCELLENCE AND REASONABLENESS OF THIS DUTY.

LUKE VI. 37.

Forgive, and you ſhall be forgiven.

THE law of forgiveneſs is oppoſed by ſome of the ſtrongeſt paſſions, and the moſt dangerous prejudices of the human heart. The vindictive paſſions are prone to precipitate themſelves on revenge, and imagine a barbarous pleaſure in gratifying this cruel propenſity—prejudice is apt to confound patience with puſillanimity, and to ſuppoſe that mildneſs of temper is calculated only to forfeit a certain reputation with the world. Pride fears to loſe, by kindneſs and condeſcenſion, that imaginary conſequence which it claims for itſelf. *My enemies have offended me. It belongs to*

the reſpect which I owe myſelf to make them feel the effects of their temerity. But pride is an inflated monſter, ever blind to its own true intereſts. More real honor, and more ſolid happineſs will be found from forgiving than avenging injuries.

Having already conſidered the requiſitions, and the extent of this law, I purpoſe, in the preſent diſcourſe, to illuſtrate its excellence, and reaſonableneſs as a principle of conduct—It implies a diſpoſition generous and noble in itſelf, and fitted to attract reſpect from the world—It tends to promote our inward tranquillity and peace—And, finally, it aſſimilates man to his Creator, whoſe moſt glorious and intereſting attribute is mercy.—After taking a ſhort review of theſe ſeveral topics, I ſhall ſtrengthen the general argument to this duty, by pointing out the cauſes that moſt commonly create diſſentions in ſociety, and ſhewing their inſufficiency to juſtify the laſting and unchriſtian reſentments which too often grow out of them.

I. In the firſt place, it implies a diſpoſition generous and noble in itſelf, and fitted to attract reſpect from the world.

All blind and violent movements of the paſſions are unworthy of our nature. The true glory of a rational mind is to ſubmit all its actions to the calm and temperate government of reaſon. There is a dignity in being able to command our feelings, and our conduct in the moſt critical ſituations, which is calculated equally to engage the eſteem of others, and to gain the approbation of our own hearts.—Where indeed, do we find the moſt vindictive diſpoſitions? Is it not commonly in thoſe who are moſt feeble both in body and in mind? But, in proportion as the ſoul is raiſed by noble and ſublime ſentiments, is conſcious of a true courage, and can reſt upon itſelf, the leſs is it prone to this baſe and degrading vice.—The puſillanimous are revengeful as well as cruel.

Thoſe who admire, without choice, the manners of the world have been pleaſed to ſay that the mildneſs and forbearance of chriſtian charity is calculated to invite injuries; and, being, in many inſtances, contrary to the eſtabliſhed maxims of honor, muſt only lead to diſgrace. Let us examine theſe aſſertions. I do not advocate a weak

good-nature, void of ſenſibility and energy of character—but, if prudence, and propriety of manners be united to a benevolence of temper ever ready to do good—and a gentleneſs always cautious of giving offence, rarely will we ſee examples of that innate malignity that is diſpoſed to purſue worth of this kind with injuſtice, or to vilify it by inſult. Even vicious men look with reſpect on goodneſs ſupported with dignity. If, here and there, ſuch an atrocious ſpirit ſhould be found, his injuſtice will be returned upon his own head by the general indignation of ſociety. Beſides, religion, in caſes of preſſing and immediate aggreſſion, forbids not the ſacred rights of ſelf-defence. And, in every caſe, it permits and requires a good man to place himſelf under the guardian power of the laws of his country, both for protection, and for reparation. The law is without paſſions. And the reparation of wrongs, which is due to the weal of ſociety, has nothing in it in common with the revenging of injuries.

With regard to thoſe falſe and frivolous maxims of honor, invented in barbarous times, and adopted by frivolous and barba-

rous men who rarely have any other claim to merit, more real glory and more public eſteem will ariſe from being ſuperior to them, than from complying with them.—We ſee them daily going into diſuſe as ſociety progreſſes in refinement. That affectation of meekneſs, indeed, that ſprings from puſillanimity is a character that deſerves to be deſpiſed. And much of the reproach that has been poured upon thoſe, who, in the ſtile of the world, *have not properly reſented injuries*, has ariſen from their own weak and unequal conduct. Raſh enough, perhaps, to give offence, it ſeems to be a pretended principle that reſtrains them from anſwering for it. True piety is unoffending, as well as averſe from contentions. And then, if, on other occaſions permitted and approved by religion, as in defending the innocent, in protecting the helpleſs, in fulfilling a hazardous duty, a proper ardor and firmneſs of mind have been diſplayed, no reproach can be incurred for acting on chriſtian principles, and being ſuperior to an unreaſonable cuſtom. It was an excellent reply made by a brave officer to one who had challenged him to ſingle combat; "You know I am not afraid to die—I am

afraid only to ſin. If you wiſh to bring our perſonal courage to the proof, I invite you to ſhew, in the approaching battle, which of us will lead our troops with the greateſt bravery to the charge." And many weak minds there are who are capable of putting their lives to hazard in a ſudden impulſe of rage, or urged by the fear of ſhame, who are not able to encounter great and real dangers with coolneſs and intrepidity at the call of duty. The principles of a pretended honor are diſgraced by their origin; and they are diſgraced by the vain, the ignorant, and impetuous men who act upon them.—Where, indeed, are thoſe doughty combats of honor moſt frequently found? Is it not at the end of bacchanalian debauches in which men have given up, not only the true glory, but almoſt the character of human nature? Is it not at beſt in thoſe moments of blind intemperate paſſion in which man is no longer rational? Real honor lies in the command of our paſſions.

Theſe are not profeſſional declaimings, and the narrow rules of a religious ſpirit at variance with human nature, and the common ſentiments of mankind. If the celeſ-

tial purity of the goſpel of peace—if the divine majeſty of truth can receive ſupport from earth, they will find it in the opinions and the conduct of the wiſeſt and the braveſt men of antiquity. That illuſtrious patriot who was the glory of the Roman Senate, and whoſe integrity and virtue were proverbial in Rome* had it for a maxim that "*we ought to pardon the faults of every other man, but never our own.*" A philoſopher,† who afterwards laid down his life with dignity, in conſequence of a moſt unjuſt perſecution, has pronounced that "revenge is inhuman, however it be authoriſed by a pernicious cuſtom. On the other hand, ſays he, how reſpectable is a man who is incapable of being penetrated by any weapon, or being hurt by injury or reproach!" When a king of Sparta‡ once ſaid "it is the office of a good prince to confer favors on his friends, and inflict puniſhments on his enemies"—"how much better would it be, replied Socrates, to do good to your friends, and to make friends of your enemies?" One of the greateſt, and

* The elder Cato.
† Seneca.
‡ Cleomenes.

certainly the moſt philoſophic of the Roman emperors* has expreſſed theſe juſt and noble ſentiments—"does any one treat me with contumely or contempt? Be the diſgrace his own—my ſtudy ſhall ever be to do nothing that deſerves to be deſpiſed. Does he cheriſh againſt me an unjuſt hatred? It is his fault. It ſhall be always my endeavour to be good, gentle, humane, and beneficent, and to ſhew him no other examples but thoſe of moderation and patience." Thus do the maxims and the conduct of theſe great men, refute the falſe notions fabricated by revenge and pride. Although it is beyond the ſphere of ordinary chriſtians to emulate philoſophers, and heroes in the fame of their writings, or the glory of their atchievements, yet is it in the power of the humbleſt believer in Chriſt to rival, and even to ſurpaſs them in the admirable ſpirit of their morals.

As philoſophy has recommended, ſo the univerſal and unbiaſſed voice of hiſtory ſerves to confirm theſe high and noble principles, and to add force to the precepts of

* Marcus Antoninus.

the goſpel itſelf. It every where records the praiſes of thoſe ſublime ſpirits who, having their enemies in their power, and being able to cruſh them in a moment, have quenched all their reſentments againſt them, and even loaded them with favours. It covers with infamy, and holds up to the execration of poſterity thoſe ferocious and vindictive monſters who would expiate with blood, or purſue with plunder, oppreſſion, and chains the ſlighteſt offences againſt their pride. Theſe are demons ſent forth to vex the peace of the world—thoſe are the gods of the earth, and benefactors of mankind. All ages vie in extolling their glory, and pronounce their names with increaſing admiration.

Our own hearts on this ſubject, warmly confirm the verdict of hiſtory. With what exquiſite emotions we behold David in the tent of Saul!* When he could, in one moment, have taken ample vengeance on that ſuſpicious tyrant for all the perſecutions he endured from him, and, by the ſame blow have placed himſelf upon his

* I. Samuel xxvi.

throne ſee him generouſly ſpare his life, and reſtrain the ardor of his indignant followers who preſſed to avenge their maſter! Not leſs amiable does he appear when, after the death of his cruel enemy, he enquires "if there yet remain any branch of the houſe of Saul, that he may do him good."* On the other hand, had he ſtained his hands with the blood even of that faithleſs prince —had he afterwards remembered his crimes to retaliate them on his poſterity, David, now the pride of hiſtory and of religion, would have become the object of our deteſtation.—Thus do the native ſentiments of the human heart contradict thoſe cruel maxims of revenge ſo often in the mouths of men. They atteſt the elevation and grandeur of thoſe principles of forgiveneſs and charity inculcated in the goſpel.

2. The meek and forgiving ſpirit of a chriſtian tends, in the next place, to promote his inward tranquility and peace.

The heart ruffled and agitated with turbulent and furious paſſions cannot be happy.

* II. Samuel ix.

Happineſs dwells only with a ſerene mind, and a benevolent temper. Gloomy projects of revenge diſquiet, and fill it with bitterneſs. Corroded by chagrin, inflamed by rage, or devoured by baſe and ſecret plans of treachery it is equally a ſtranger to peace.—Is the object of your enmity raiſed above you ſo, that the ſhafts of your malice cannot reach him? What vexation gnaws, what impotent fury ſwells the boſom!—Are your beſt concerted ſchemes of vengeance fruſtrated by ſome unforeſeen accident? Or are they, by the wiſdom and prudence of your adverſary, turned upon your own head? What confuſion and ſhame!—But you have been ſucceſsful—you have humbled him by diſgrace—you have cruſhed him by your power—you have made him feel the weight of your reſentment—are theſe gratifications that, in a calm hour, you can review with ſatisfaction? No—when the paſſions ſubſide, and reaſon reſumes its empire, the work of vengeance always affords food for painful reflection. The maxim that revenge is ſweet is a maxim only of the paſſions—it is falſe. If, in the dark moment of accompliſhing its guilty purpoſe a diabolical pleaſure gleams

acroſs the mind, the tranſient flaſh, leaves the cloud that covers it afterwards only the more black and heavy. Hardly could a man invent for his enemy a puniſhment more cruel than that with which revenge torments himſelf. It is a cockatrice that ſtings the boſom that has given it life. Vexed by anxious ſuſpicions, toſſed by impatient deſires, the hated image of his enemy is continually before his eyes—it haunts him in the day, and deſpoils of their reſt even the hours allotted to repoſe.—See the reſtleſs movements, the convulſed boſom, the inflamed countenance, the pale and quivering lips, the dark and rancorous viſage of revenge, and ſay if happineſs can reſide there. Above all, when vengeance thirſts to drink the blood of its enemy, what direful ſtorms, what avenging furies does it excite in the breaſt, after this horrid appetite is ſated! Then the ſpectres of murder ſhoot before the terrified fancy—then conſcience thunders at the bottom of the ſoul. Heaven above appears in wrath, and Hell beneath ſeems to augment her flames, and expand her jaws to receive to a more fearful doom than that of other ſin-

ners, the wretch who descends into it all covered with his brother's blood.

If your companion, or your friend falls by the murderous weapon of *honor*, that prostituted name for *pride* and *vengeance*, does a less degree of misery follow this deed? Will not the rank crime of blood still harrow up the recollection? Will not the broken ties of friendship still drop with gore before the melancholy and troubled mind? After humanity has recovered from the frenzy of passion, can it look on the deep affliction of bereaved parents—perhaps, on the anguish of a frantic wife, and the cries and tears of helpless orphans calling for their lost father, and not execrate the impious deed? Will not the profound griefs, and the heavy curse of so many distracted mourners light upon the soul like a pestilential breath, and blast all the remaining years of life?—Ah! revenge, however it may be disguised, or sanctioned by the guilty manners of the world, is the cruel poisoner of human happiness. It is daily filling the earth with crimes, and is the parent of half the miseries that afflict mankind.

On the other hand, the gentle ſpirit of forgiveneſs, which is the perfection of charity, preſerves a conſtant ſerenity in the ſoul, and ſaves it from thoſe rude tempeſts that would neceſſarily deſtroy its peace. It imparts to the mind the high conſciouſneſs of approaching the ſummit of virtue by the command which it holds over all the paſſions. By quenching the firſt ſparks of diviſion and diſorder, it becomes one of the moſt powerful principles of ſocial union and happineſs. Where it reigns, a peace and order reigns reſembling Heaven, "Behold how good, and how pleaſant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is as the dew of Hermon; as the dew that deſcended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the bleſſing, even life forevermore."* This exalted ſpirit of charity is connected with the beſt and happieſt affections of the human heart. Nay, aſcending far above human nature, it derives its origin from that eternal fount in of love which is the ſource, and the center of union among all intelligent beings. The

* Pſalms 133.

temper of forgiveneſs towards our enemies exerciſed from the delightful conſtraints of divine love, as well as from the conſideration of thoſe dear and tender claims which mankind have upon us, by being partakers of the ſame nature, and heirs of the ſame frailties with ourſelves, yields the heart a perpetual ſpring of the moſt pure and tranquil ſatisfactions. Its pleaſures are an infinite overbalance for all the ſacrifices which ſo arduous a duty requires. And it is perhaps, the beſt culture by which to prepare the ſoul for that perfect love, and thoſe immortal unions that ſhall take place in the celeſtial ſtate.

3. The higheſt recommendation of this evangelical diſpoſition is, that it aſſimilates man to that firſt and perfect Being whoſe moſt glorious attribute is mercy. "Love your enemies, ſaith the bleſſed Saviour, and do good to them that hate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven; for he maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt, and on the unjuſt."* The univer-

* Matthew v. 45.

ſal goodneſs of the Creator is the moſt ſub-lime example for the imitation of man. Every moment he is offended by human follies and crimes; yet, every moment, he ſhowers on the offenders nothing but bleſſings. The rain fertilizes their fields—the ſun brings the fruits of the earth to maturity for their uſe. To guilty man every ſun that riſes upon him in peace, and even every herb that ſprings for his benefit or pleaſure ſhould be a monitor to remind him of that benignity and forbearance which he ought to exerciſe towards thoſe who have offended him. Does not every moment of a life prolonged to him by divine mercy demonſtrate the injuſtice of hatred and revenge? Shall a frail and miſerable worm thirſt for vengeance when that Almighty Being to whom alone it belongs forbears to execute it?* "Be ye, therefore, perfect, as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect"†—that is, in the language of another evangeliſt, "be merciful as he is merciful."‡

* St. Cyprian.
† Matthew v. 48.
‡ Luke vi. 36.

But the moſt intereſting motive for the cultivation of this temper is to be drawn from the great act of divine mercy in the croſs of Chriſt. "God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet enemies Chriſt died for us."* Behold that bleſſed victim who, having lived with meekneſs amidſt innumerable inſults and reproaches, died with a ſweetneſs and patience worthy the image and the organ of the divine love to man! While ſinners were pouring upon him their curſes, he ſheds upon them his bleſſings. While they were multiplying on his ſacred perſon the moſt cruel outrages, with infinite benignity he pronounces their forgiveneſs, and even makes the apology of their crimes—"Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do."† Ah! chriſtians! what an example to us whoſe ſins were obliterated by that act! It is calculated to touch the deepeſt ſprings of the ſoul. Can we hear his gracious voice and not extinguiſh every hateful and malignant paſſion which pride has enkindled in the heart? Can *we* be the ſubjects of divine forgiveneſs,

* Rom. v. 8.
† Luke xxiii. 34.

and ſhall we not be willing alſo to forgive? "Let therefore, all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking be put away from you, with all malice.—And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you."*

The reaſonableneſs of this duty will become ſtill more apparent from conſidering the inſufficient grounds of thoſe averſions and reſentments that moſt frequently diſturb the harmony of ſociety—they are contradictions to our opinions—offences to our pride—oppoſition to our pleaſures or intereſts—injuſtice to our character and reputation.

The moſt innocent differences of opinion have often given riſe to implacable diſſentions between various parties; and their minds, ſoured, irritated and inflamed, break aſunder, the gentle and holy bands of humanity and charity. It ſeems as if the ſelf-love of men took their judgment under its protection with peculiar fondneſs. Each

* Eph. iv. 32.

one is diſpoſed to make his own reaſon the ſtandard for others not only in political and religious tenets, but even in the management of the moſt common affairs, and is offended at thoſe differences that muſt ever neceſſarily ſpring out of the imperfection of human nature. They are imputed to malignity, to corruption of heart, to every unworthy cauſe that can juſtify our reſentment. Alas! how unbecoming are concluſions of this kind to wiſe men who underſtand the narrow limits of human reaſon, and the infinite prepoſſeſſions of the human heart that give a bias to opinion! Genuine wiſdom ſearches for truth with candor, and embraces it with firmneſs in proportion to its evidence: but, at the ſame time, has forbearance for the weak, has tolerance for the prejudiced, and knows no other weapons for the defence or propagation of its opinions but thoſe of perſuaſion and conviction.

Other grounds of reſentment are found in thoſe offences to pride and ſelf-eſteem that are ſo often given in the intercourſe of ſociety.

Not to mention that the inſolence and diſdain of the rich, and the envy and jealouſy of the poor, which are frequently the cauſes of mutual hatred and injuſtice, are equally the fruits of an ignorant pride that has not learned to reſt merit on its true foundations, the influence of this unholy and uncharitable principle is daily appearing on the moſt ordinary and frivolous occaſions. The different circles into which accident or choice has arranged ſociety are made the grounds of a thouſand little injuries that are ſuffered to ferment in the breaſt, and to deſtroy their mutual candor. The circumſtance alone of being connected with different parties, or moving in different ſpheres is apt to touch the pride of infirm minds. You have not obtained that rank in particular companies, you have not received that attention from certain perſons which you thought was your due—you have perceived in them a reſerved or haughty air, you have ſeen a ſuſpicious glance, you have obſerved a diſdainful ſmile. Hence ariſe animoſities, hatreds, complaints. Society is diſturbed with your reſentments. Yet, when the cauſe is examined, perhaps it exiſts only in your own ſuſpicions. If it has

a foundation, the evil is aggravated by the jealouſy of pride. But, be the offence as great as your ſelf-love has painted it, is it a ground on which you ſhould violate towards your neighbour all the precious charities of religion? A wiſe man, acquainted with the world, ſhould remember how often theſe appearances are miſtaken—a good man, pitying the weakneſs that would offer him an unmerited inſult, ſhould be contented, like the Roman Emperor, to do nothing that deſerves to be deſpiſed.*

Repeated and pointed oppoſitions to our intereſts or pleaſures, as they are hard to be borne by the frailty of human nature, are too often eſteemed a juſtification of the revengeful paſſions. How can I love the man, you ſay, who, on all occaſions, ſets himſelf againſt me? How can I forgive the malice that is perpetually thwarting my deſigns, and defeating my beſt founded hopes? Remember that you ſee his actions only through the medium of reſentments that diſcolour all their objects. The malice which you impute to him may be nothing

* Page 254.

more than a ſucceſsful rivalſhip, and the moſt lawful uſe of his own rights. His interference with your purſuits may have been wholly accidental, a thing without any unfriendly deſign. Yet your ſelf-love repreſents it as a cruel and intentional injury. Ah! how unjuſt are your ſuſpicions both to yourſelf and to him! But, were he an enemy ſhall you add to the injury he has already done you, one ſtill greater, by wounding your own peace, and putting in hazard your eternal ſalvation? How much more worthy of a chriſtian would it be to be ſuperior to evil by the force of divine love, and, in the riches and glory of your celeſtial inheritance, to be able to forget all the inferior injuries of time.

Finally, another cauſe of thoſe bitter and uncharitable reſentments that ſo often diſquiet the peace of the world, is to be found in the tales and whiſpers that are continually ſtealing through ſociety, like an infectious air, and poiſoning the ſources of its happineſs.—That perſon, you ſuppoſe, has done injuſtice to your reputation, or ſpoken of you with contempt or ſlight. This may be a miſrepreſentation as unjuſt to him as

to you. It may be the work of that ever brooding ſuſpicion only that hatches in the fancy nothing but ſcorpions to ſting and deſtroy its own peace. It may be merely the tale of inconſiderate and talkative perſons who are continually *ſcattering through ſociety firebrands, arrows, and death, and then ſay,* like the madman, *is it not in ſport?*—Perhaps it has been inſinuated to you by deſigning men, who delight in the miſchiefs they create, or by falſe friends who ſtudy only to recommend themſelves by a pretended and officious zeal for you.—If he has ſpoken againſt you, may it not have been the effect of inconſideration which innocence does not feel, and to which generoſity of temper will be ſuperior? May it not have been occaſioned by the influence of pernicious ſlanderers and tale bearers who have prepoſſeſſed and ſoured his mind? A weakneſs which, a good man will pity and excuſe. May it not have ariſen from dark and ſuſpicious circumſtances in your own conduct which you have not condeſcended to explain? Have you not, with too much pride, obſerved a certain diſtance and reſerve with regard to theſe circumſtances that leaves ſuſpicion to impreſs upon them

its darkeſt colours? A great wit once ſaid, "it is neceſſary for mankind only to converſe together freely every day to make them all of one religion." With much greater truth might it be ſaid that a free and candid intercourſe would make them all friends.

But, admit that he has ſlandered, that he has reproached you, and that you have found in him the certain proofs of an unreaſonable enmity, how ought a chriſtian to retaliate and refute ſuch unworthy charges? Not by falling into the ſame faults—not by bitterneſs, and clamor, and wrath. Theſe are unholy weapons, and are uſually the evidences of a weak and vulnerable character in thoſe who uſe them. A mild and amiable diſpoſition, a prudent and virtuous conduct is the beſt refutation of every calumny to the world. And, with regard to him, the dignity of meekneſs and ſilence will humble him infinitely more than any reſentments, which tend only to gratify his pride, and to give him a malicious conſequence in his own eſteem, by ſeeing his power to diſturb your repoſe.

Upon the whole view of the ſubject, how amiable as a rule of conduct, is the chriſtian law of forgiveneſs and charity! It contains in it the ſublimeſt philoſophy, as well as the principles of the moſt intereſting civility and politeneſs of manners. Not only does it prohibit contention and hoſtility, but all thoſe rude and unfriendly paſſions that diſturb the harmony of ſociety—nay, "whoſoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe," violates its mild and benevolent ſpirit. If all men would ſubmit their paſſions and their actions to its gentle controul, it would ſpeedily render the world, now filled with diſorder and with crimes, an image of the peace and felicity of Heaven. I am aware there are delicate ſituations into which a man may be thrown, which will render obedience to this law, the laſt effort of ſelf-command. But no virtue can be perfected without an effort—no victory can be gained without a conflict. Let it be remembered that the greater the obſtacles are which you overcome, the richer will be your crown in the regions of immortal peace. The duty is of the higheſt importance, and it will, from the impartial judge of all, receive a proportionable reward.—If it is

difficult, it is not impoſſible. And it becomes a chriſtian continually to implore, at the throne of divine grace, thoſe aids of the Holy Spirit that will enable him to cultivate and bring it to perfection.

In order to avoid contention and wrath, cultivate a meek and benevolent temper.—"As much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men." Maintain an inoffenſive commerce with the world. Let every kind and delicate attention mark your intercourſe with your friends and companions. Be ready, without envy or coldneſs, to render juſtice to their good qualities—interpret with candor their doubtful actions—treat with indulgence their capricious humors—caſt a mantle of love over their infirmities. Aid not the ſlander, or ridicule thrown on abſent characters; but make it your benevolent rule to defend them. Never lend an ear to calumny; nor liſten to the officious and faithleſs tales brought to you by others againſt yourſelf, only to diſquiet your peace. Seek not to intermeddle in affairs that are not your own. Eſpecially, beware of prying into the ſecrets of families in order to diſcloſe them. Never give way to ſudden im-

pulſes of paſſion; but check them till you have had leiſure to conſider and reflect.—Imitate the example of the bleſſed Jeſus "who, when he was he reviled, reviled not again, when he ſuffered he threatened not."* Governed by the maxims of prudence and benevolence, rarely will you have important injuries to reſent—and ſtill more rarely will it not be in your power to curb your reſentments, and ſubdue your paſſions, which you have already reduced under habitual controul.

But, if, notwithſtanding the clear and explicit law of Chriſt, and ſo many motives to the practice of charity and mercy as the goſpel exhibits, the poiſon of a revengeful temper, the gall of bitterneſs and wrath ſhould ſtill lodge at the bottom of the heart, remember that he who ſheweth no mercy ſhall himſelf meet with none from a juſt and righteous God. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourſelves. Vengeance is mine I will repay, ſaith the Lord."†—Haughty and vindictive ſpirits! who would pluck from the hand of the Almighty the

* Pet. ii. 22.
† Rom. xii. 19.

ballance and the ſword, look up to that tribunal where your own judgment awaits you; and let the awful majeſty of divine juſtice humble your pride, and correct your rage. What right have you to encompaſs the altars of mercy? With what plea can you approach the throne of grace? How can you dare pronounce that prayer dictated by divine love in the form of man—"forgive us our treſpaſſes as we forgive thoſe who treſpaſs againſt us!" Alas! in it you imprecate upon your heads the moſt tremendous curſe. *As* you forgive thoſe who treſpaſs againſt you! When revenge ſtill rankles in your heart! When you hate, when you abhor, when you would cruſh your enemy in the duſt! Juſt God! is not this to demand thy thunders? Is it not to tempt, to ſolicit from thy hands the flames that are deſtined to conſume hardened and impenitent guilt? Renounce then at the foot of the croſs, on which the Saviour died for his enemies, all malice and anger—"let not the ſun go down upon your wrath." Extinguiſh in your hearts its unhallowed flames. And let no fires burn there but the holy fires of love to God, and love to mankind. AMEN!

DISCOURSE XI.

ON THE PLEASURES OF RELIGION.

PSALMS XIX. 11.

In keeping of them there is great reward.

WHAT is the chief good? Was the great inquiry of the ancient ſchools; and the different anſwers to this queſtion formed the principal diſtinctions among the various ſects of philoſophy. Happineſs is the end of all the purſuits of men—it is the object of all their ſighs. Yet are they almoſt ever diſappointed in the means that are taken to obtain it. They follow the dictates of their paſſions. And it is not till after they have fought it in vain through every form of falſe pleaſure that they come, at length to find it, where alone reaſon and religion have concurred to place it in obedience to God, and a life of virtue. Here the anxious mind finds a calm and ſettled

peace which it had not known, and which it could not know amidſt the agitations of the world—and here it finds thoſe ſublime, and delightful objects of contemplation, or enjoyment which alone are worthy of a rational and immortal nature. Vicious men who ſee nothing in God but an angry judge, the enemy of their pleaſures, and who ſee nothing in religion but the reſtraints which it impoſes upon their favorite enjoyments, are apt to repreſent it to themſelves as an auſtere ſervice, and as drawing a deep ſhade of melancholy and gloom over the whole of life. But a good man who has all his inclinations regulated by the principles of reaſon, and the ſpirit of piety, will find, in the affections and the objects of religion, the ſources of his ſupreme enjoyment. He need not aſk, like the diſcontented world, "who will ſhew us any good? God is his chief good. "And, in keeping his commandments, there is great reward."

This reflection of the pſalmiſt might be extended to ſhew the beneficial influence of religion on all our temporal, as well as our eternal concerns. A rational piety, unmixed with the exceſſes of enthuſiaſm, or the

gloom of ſuperſtition, contributes to the improvement of all the eſtimable qualities both of body and of mind. By freeing the ſoul from the obſcuring miſts of ſenſual paſſions, it tends to enlighten and invigorate thoſe powers, whatever they may be, with which it hath pleaſed the Creator to endow it. By reſtraining pernicious vices, and by the moderation of the appetites, it is favourable to health. The goodneſs and benevolence of heart which real piety inſpires, ſheds an inimitable grace upon the manners. It gives a purity of ſentiment, and dignity of conduct that attracts eſteem and confidence from the world, and by the habits of temperance, frugality, induſtry, and integrity which it promotes, it is friendly to the advancement of every temporal intereſt.

Theſe ſubjects would bear an ample and an uſeful illuſtration. But I purpoſe, in this diſcourſe, to confine my view to the internal comforts that flow from religion. It offers the higheſt ſatisfactions to the mind—It yields the pureſt pleaſures to the heart—It introduces ſerenity and peace into the breaſt—And finally, it affords a ſource

of happineſs that is always within our power, that is ſecure from the viciſſitudes of life, and that ſhall be eternal.

1. It offers the higheſt ſatisfactions to the mind.—The exerciſe of reaſon and imagination, which are its principal powers, on objects worthy their nature, are among the chief, as they are certainly among the nobleſt pleaſures of a thinking being. To live without thought, or to employ its energies on low and degrading objects, is to ſink our nature, and to rob it of a ſublime felicity to which the goodneſs of the creator had deſtined it. And what ſubjects are ſo great and intereſting, and ſo well deſerve to employ the rational faculties of man as thoſe which religion preſents to his contemplation? The being and perfection of the Deity, and his glorious works who *in wiſdom hath made them all*—the aſtoniſhing economy of our redemption through an incarnate and a ſuffering Saviour, *which things the angels deſire to look into*—the nature of man, ſo ſkilfully and *wonderfully made*—the perfect law of his duty—and his preſent and eternal deſtinations. Of theſe ſublime ideas vicious men likewiſe may em-

ploy their talents. But, not directed by a ſpirit of piety, their views are falſe and narrow, their concluſions ſceptical and cold. They perceive not that high glow of delight which a good man feels who examines into them only that he may adore God with a more profound ſentiment, and offer him a more exalted and reaſonable ſervice.

Imagination, alſo derives its moſt elevating and delightful exerciſes from religion. Its proper field, and employment is among the works of nature, contemplating their grandeur, their wiſdom, and their beauty, and inflaming devotion by conſidering the indications which they contain of infinite power, intelligence, and goodneſs. Piety ſees God in all things; and, by its influence on the heart, ſheds a divine charm over the univerſe. The holy pſalmiſt, in many of his compoſitions, that are as much diſtinguiſhed by the fine genius of poetry by which they were inſpired, as by the ſpirit of devotion which they breathe, gives us a beautiful example of an imagination kindled, and a heart touched by theſe pious views of nature. The heavens declare the

glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy work."* "O Lord my God! thou art exceeding great! thou art clothed with honor and majeſty! who covereſt thyſelf with light as with a garment who ſtretcheſt out the heavens like a curtain! who layeſt the beams of thy chambers in the waters! who makeſt the clouds thy chariots! who walkeſt upon the wings of the wind! O Lord! how manifold are thy works! In wiſdom thou haſt made them all! The earth is full of thy riches!"† "Praiſe him Sun and Moon. Praiſe him all ye ſtars of light! Praiſe him ye Heavens of Heavens!"‡ The writings of this author are full of ſuch divine extaſies. A good man cannot read them without partaking, in ſome meaſure, of the delightful enthuſiaſm by which they were inſpired. With the ſame ſpirit, likewiſe, *he* contemplates the works of the Creator, and often derives from them the like holy raptures. Imagination and taſte, the ſources of ſo many boaſted pleaſures to the refined and cultivated mind, afford even to it comparatively barren and frigid enjoy-

* Pſalms ix. 1.
† Pſalms civ.
‡ Pſalms cxlviii.

ments unleſs they are united with religion, and warmed with its ſacred fires.

II. Religion likewiſe yields the pureſt pleaſures to the heart.

The principal enjoyments of life are derived from warm and regulated affections. We may be ſaid to be happy in proportion as we love what is worthy of the heart.—The reigning affections of piety are *the love of God*, and *the love of man*. No principles of happineſs are ſo pure and excellent in themſelves, or ſo ennobling to human nature. When we turn our view on the divine perfection, can any ideas yield ſo tranſcendent a pleaſure to a virtuous and pious heart, as that infinite intelligence that ſhines through all the wonderful ſtructure of nature, and impreſſes its character on every object that we behold—as that infinite benignity that ſpreads the light of its beauty on the whole face of the world, and which we continually experience in the felicity of our own lot—in a word, as that infinite cauſe of all that is ſublime, or excellent in the univerſe, that ſurrounds us wherever we go, and that intimately penetrates our be-

ing. Meditations on theſe divine ſubjects are moſt worthy of a reaſonable and immortal mind; and they are calculated to introduce into it the pureſt conſolations, and, at ſome precious and choſen moments, the holieſt raptures. Pious men, with one voice, confeſs that their happieſt ſeaſons are thoſe in which they are moſt ſenſible of the divine preſence; or, in which, approaching the throne of God with an humble truſt in the divine mercy, they pour out their ſouls to him in the ſweet effuſions of gratitude and love. "There be many who ſay, who will ſhew us any good? Lord! lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us! Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine abounded."* "Whom have I in heaven but thee! and there is none upon earth I deſire beſide thee!"† Theſe are not the enjoyments of an unſanctified, or of a cold heart. But, when the heart is *renewed after the image of God*, and formed to the reliſh of divine truth—when it is *created anew in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works*, and animated by the ſpirit of piety, it enjoys them with a

* Pſalms xlviii.
† Pſalms lxxiii.

ſatisfaction not to be deſcribed, and derives from the objects of religion pleaſures far ſuperior to thoſe that are yielded by the world, or that are ever taſted by vicious men.

But the divine benignity to mankind ſhines moſt conſpicuously in a crucified Redeemer. What a ſubject of delight to a ſincere chriſtian who feels his obligations to redeeming mercy! At the foot of the croſs he pours the floods of his gratitude, and, looking up to the great ſacrifice of his ſalvation, he indulges the holy triumphs of immortal hope. Bleſſed Jeſus! what conſolations flow from thy love! Where can the world open ſuch a ſacred and inexhauſted fountain of joy? "Whom, having not ſeen, we love; in whom believing we rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory."*

The next branch of religion conſiſts in thoſe kind affections that connect us with mankind. "Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf," is one half the law of chriſtian duty, and is the great cement of chriſtian

* 1. Peter i. 8.

ſociety. The ordinary intercourſe of the world is a cold commerce of intereſt, or a hypocritical drama of fictitious feelings. And the harmony of ſociety is liable to be frequently diſturbed and broken by envy, malice, hatred, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, and ſuch turbulent and malignant paſſions, which are equally painful to thoſe who indulge them, and thoſe againſt whom they are directed. True piety, which makes us feel our fraternity with mankind, commands us to extinguiſh all thoſe ſelfiſh diſpoſitions which throw men at a diſtance from one another. If all men were governed by its benevolent ſpirit, it would transform this hoſtile and contentious world into an image of Paradiſe. By the amiable repreſentation which the apoſtle gives of this evangelic temper we may eſtimate its lovely and happy fruits. "Charity ſuffereth long and is kind—charity envieth not—charity vaunteth not itſelf—is not puffed up—doth not behave itſelf unſeemly—ſeeketh not her own—is not eaſily provoked—thinketh no evil—rejoiceth not in iniquity—but rejoiceth in the truth—beareth all things—believeth all things—hopeth all things—en-

dureth all things."* Many of our moſt tender and refreſhing pleaſures ariſe out of thoſe kind affections that unite us to the great family of mankind. And heaven, as it reſpects our intercourſe with one another, is but the perfection of theſe amiable diſpoſitions.—Humanity, that meets in every man a brother—Sympathy, that enters with warmth into the virtuous ſenſibilities of others—Friendſhip, that glows with generous emotions, and binds us to thoſe whom we love by the fineſt ties—Candour, that puts on every dubious appearance the moſt favorable interpretation—Charity, that feels with quickneſs the diſtreſſes of the unhappy—Integrity, that gives to all their due, and is unwilling to owe any man aught but love—and Generoſity, that is more than juſt, the benevolent overflowing of the ſoul, are principles of the higheſt value, not only for their uſeful and happy effects on ſociety but for the ſweet enjoyment which they yield to our own boſom.

The exerciſe of friendſhip and benevolence to others is the way to enſure the like

* I. Corinthians xiii.

returns from them. Or, if we meet with unreaſonable and malignant ſpirits, it is the beſt means to eſcape, or to render abortive their injurious deſigns. How many feuds might be avoided, and what quietneſs of mind might be preſerved, by a meekneſs and forbearance that cannot be provoked to retaliate the aggreſſions, and offences of unreaſonable men? How many wounds to our own peace might be prevented by a gentleneſs and humility that does not unneceſſarily offend the pride, or invite the inſolence of others? What painful irritations might be allayed, or would never be ſuffered to riſe in the heart, by a candour that is not eaſily induced to think evil, or indulge ſuſpicions of our neighbour, and by a generous prudence and dignity of mind that refuſes to liſten to the calumnies of the world?—If a man would live reſpected and eſteemed, and enjoy the exquiſite pleaſure of loving, and being beloved, let him early cruſh in his heart the ſeeds of all unſocial paſſions, and cultivate in his commerce with men the divine principles of gentleneſs and benevolence.

The ſatisfactions that are derived from this ſource to a good man, may be eſtimated by comparing them with the inquietudes that ſpring from bitter and uncharitable paſſions. Pride, envy, malice, ſuſpicion, torment the boſom in which they dwell. Jealouſies, rivalſhips, ardent competitions diſturb that ſerenity of mind ſo eſſential to happineſs. Slanders, diſcords and mutual injuries poiſon individual comfort, and tend to rent ſociety to pieces. If violent and malevolent tempers could attain all for which they contend, and moſt ſucceſsfully depreſs a rival, or revenge an injury, their ſatisfactions would be infinitely overballanced by their pains. Turbid and dark, at beſt, they reſemble the malignant joys of infernal ſpirits.

As a good man enjoys greater felicity than others from the predominance of humane and gentle diſpoſitions in his own breaſt, he likewiſe ſuffers leſs than the wrathful and reſentful, from the injuſtice and the ſlanders which the envy or the malice of the world may aim againſt him. They, by a rancour that envenoms the heart, by the boiling fury of their rage, or by violent

projects of vengeance, pierce their own boſoms with deeper wounds than their enemies had it in their power to inflict. He, by an equanimity of temper, and dignity of ſentiment, the fruit of conſcious virtue, preſerves a compoſed and unruffled mind. He dwells above the clouds and ſtorms of the paſſions that afflict the inferior world, and enjoys a ſerene ſky. Even calumny the cruel diſturber of ſociety can hardly diſcompoſe his ſettled tranquility. Secure in his own innocence, he can calmly leave to time and providence his vindication. Nay, enabled, by divine grace, to pity and forgive his enemies, he enjoys, in this heavenly diſpoſition, a ſweeter ſatisfaction than he could derive from the moſt ſucceſsful plans of vengeance.

III. Religion is favorable to human happineſs by the ſerenity and peace which it introduces into the breaſt.

It frees the ſoul from the miſrule of thoſe turbulent and exceſſive paſſions that agitate the world with a continual tempeſt. The heart thrown into tumult by ambition, avarice, luſt, or rage, knows no reſt. Even the

attainment of its object ſerves only to inflame it with new deſires, or to corrode it with new cares. "The wicked are like the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt—there is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked."*—Many of the ancient ſchools of philoſophy teaching that theſe painful ſolicitudes were neceſſarily attached to the nature of the paſſions, it was the aim of their wiſe man to be without paſſions, in order that he might enjoy within himſelf, a conſtant and unruffled calm. His temper became by this means auſtere and unamiable. If he was not moved by the intereſts of the world, he was often negligent of its decencies—if he was not diſcompoſed by the injuries of men, he took no ſhare alſo in their ſympathetic pleaſures. Religion affects not that phlegmatic, or that ſour temper. But, while it gives to the affections that moderate indulgence which nature, by implanting them in the breaſt, intended they ſhould have, and which is requiſite, both to pleaſure, and utility, it tempers their ardor, directs their force to lawful objects, and renders them obedient to the authority of reaſon. Hence

* Iſaiah lvii. 20, 21.

ariſes that ſweet compoſure and ſerenity of mind, ſo neceſſary to our happineſs, and equally removed from the uneaſy ſtorms of paſſion, and an indolent inſipidity of character. Solomon, who had thoroughly tried the intemperate pleaſures of vice, and the tranquil enjoyments of piety, gives his decided teſtimony in favor of the latter.—"The ways of wiſdom are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace."*

But what I have chiefly in view in ſpeaking of the peace that ſprings from religion, is that which ariſes from the untroubled and ſelf-approving conſcience.

Among the higheſt ſatisfactions of the mind, are the conſciouſneſs of innocence, and reflection on a well ſpent life. Vice, indeed, often appears dreſſed in ſmiles, and wears the face of happineſs—but a worm within ſecretly corrodes and cankers its peace. "Like the crackling of thorns under a pot ſo is the laughter of a fool." The blaze is ſoon extinguiſhed and all that follows is diſappointment and ſhame. The

* Proverbs iii. 17.

ſinner cannot look into his own breaſt for that clear and living fountain of joy that continually refreſhes the ſoul of a good man with its pure ſtreams. When he attempts to turn his view inward he diſcerns nothing but crimes and follies, and miſgivings, and fears. Hardly can you render him more unhappy than to remove him from the circle of diſſipation and to leave him alone with himſelf. Harraſſed by the apprehenſions and ſelf-reproach that follow vice, you frequently ſee him take refuge from them in principles of impiety and immorality.

The peace of a good man ariſes from a pure conſcience, from a ſenſe of forgiven ſin, and an humble truſt in the mercy of God. The forgiveneſs of ſin relieves the heart from an immenſe load. The inquietudes of guilt are ſweetly compoſed by the hope of divine mercy exerciſed through a Redeemer. "In his favour is life, and his loving kindneſs is better than life." A calm and ſelf-approving mind affords us pleaſures of the higheſt price, not only from the inward ſerenity that reigns in the boſom; but becauſe it ſheds its own ſatisfactions on all

things elſe. The univerſe takes its colouring, if I may ſpeak ſo, from within ourſelves. And the lawful comforts of the world are taſted with infinitely a higher reliſh when they are enjoyed with a good conſcience. "The fruit of righteouſneſs is peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance forever."* The beſt of men, indeed, are liable to frailties and errors that may ſometimes diſturb the peace of their minds. But repentance ſoon reſtores their ſerenity. And when its tranſient and precious ſhowers have been ſhed upon the ſoul, the *ſun of righteouſneſs* again breaks forth, with greater ſplendor and beauty, from the cloud that, for a moment had obſcured his face. Repentance itſelf is not without its ſatisfactions to a good man. There is a pleaſure even in the tears by which the heart is diſburdened of an ingenuous ſorrow.

The peace derived from religion diſplays its value in thoſe moments chiefly when we moſt require ſupport and conſolation, in affliction, and at death. "To the upright there ariſeth light in darkneſs."† "Yea,

* Iſaiah xxxii. 17.
† Pſalms cxii. 4.

though I walk through the valley of the ſhadow of death, yet will I fear no ill; for thou art with me—thy rod, and thy ſtaff, they comfort me."* But the guilt of the ſinner ſeems to lie in wait for him at theſe diſtreſſing ſeaſons.† It ſeizes upon him with redoubled fury when he is already trembling before *the king of terrors;* and, when he is leaſt able to endure it, torments him with the greateſt cruelty. Guilt ſpreads a deep and troubled cloud over the mind that covers it with a diſmal ſhade, and the ſpectres of fear and terror ſtalk through the gloom, and affright the departing ſpirit. Oh! the unſpeakable importance of a conſcience at peace with itſelf and with God in the intereſting article of dying! What would not the periſhing ſinner give to obtain it? For what would the triumphant believer be willing to exchange it? All the pleaſures of vice, were they at the command of the one, or of the other, would be counted as nothing in the ſcale.

IV. Religion affords a ſource of happineſs that is always within our power--that is ſecure

* Pſalms xxiii.
† Tillotſon.

from the viciſſitudes of life—and that ſhall be eternal.—Seldom are the ſources of vicious pleaſures completely within our power. Men ſee them at a diſtance, and almoſt the whole of life is employed in purſuing them. But how often do they elude purſuit, or diſappoint poſſeſſion! Difficult to be obtained, they are conſtantly liable to be wreſted from us by a violence the more painful in proportion as we have loved them, or expected felicity from them. The paſſions either never reach their object, or are never ſatisfied with what they have gained. In the cares of accumulating fortune, who has attained the ſummit of his wiſhes? In the career of popularity, or ambition, how many muſt neceſſarily be thrown out in the courſe? And thorny and uneaſy is the crown which the victors gain. And, amidſt the pleaſures of unlawful love, what treachery is found! what inconſtancy! what rivalſhips! what jealouſies! what baſe deceptions! what diſhonorable diſguiſes! and, at length, what conſcious ſhame! Is it not extreme folly for a reaſonable mind to place its happineſs in objects over which it has no controul, and of which the greater part are beyond its reach?

A good man carries within himſelf, in the purity of his thoughts, in the ſanctity of his affections, in the diſcharge of his duty, and in the ſenſe of the divine favor, the ſources of his beſt enjoyments, or he every where finds them in the works of God that are always open to his view, and his devout meditation. From all the uncertain purſuits, and perplexing cares of the world, he can turn inward and find in his own breaſt, an unwaſting ſpring of conſolation. And wherever he directs his view he cannot fail to meet in every part of nature, conſpicuous indications of the infinite power, wiſdom and benignity of God. The univerſe is an immenſe temple in which he finds ſubjects continually to awaken devotion, and to nouriſh the ſublime pleaſures of religion. His own experience unceaſingly brings home to his heart the proofs along with the fruits of the divine goodneſs. And the ſacred ſcriptures furniſh to him an inexhauſted treaſure of the moſt delightful affections, and the moſt bleſſed hopes. The ſources of his ſupreme happineſs, therefore, are not, like thoſe of vice, uncertain, or placed beyond his controul: They are always within his reach, they are ever preſent, and he can-

not, by any untoward accident, be deprived of them.

The comforts that flow from religion are alſo ſecure from the viciſſitudes of life.—The men who have connected their happineſs too cloſely with the preſent world, are liable to all its inſtability and its changes. They are expoſed continually to have their deareſt comforts taken from them, or blaſted to their enjoyment. Their poſſeſſions may melt away in their hands, or, by ſome ſudden and unforeſeen calamity, may be wreſted from them. The friends who were dearer to them than their own ſouls may be torn from their embrace. It may pleaſe God to lay on them heavy affliction, and to embitter to them all the ſatisfactions of the world; or to bury the world along with them in the grave. The grave is to them a land of darkneſs and horror. And when the world is gone, gone with it is all their happineſs.

On the other hand, the divine power forms a mighty and impenetrable ſhield over a good man beneath which he walks ſecure amidſt all the evils and perils that

encompaſs his mortal ſtate. He is ſubject to external changes in his lot as others are; but his happineſs is independent on them. It lies far above this varying, unſtable ſcene, and beyond the influence of its viciſſitudes. Storms and tempeſts may agitate and afflict the lower world; but he has gained an elevated ſituation above them where the ſun always ſhines. His happineſs partakes of the ſerenity of Heaven, and the unchangeableneſs of God. If afflictions aſſail him they tend only to purify his heart, and to connect him more cloſely with his chief-good. If the grave receives him, God is ſtill his portion. It is not a gulph that buries his pleaſures, or his hopes—it is the gate, already bleſſed by his Saviour's paſſage through it, that admits him to the full fruition of them. Nay, when not this frail tenement of clay alone ſhall moulder into duſt, but when the univerſe ſhall be diſſolved and fall in ruins; in the laſt tremendous convulſions of nature, the good man is ſafe. The almighty power of God will preſerve him, and plant him in thoſe *new heavens* and that *new earth* that ſhall ariſe out of the chaos.—Bleſſed portion! his

felicity ſhall be ſecure from all viciſſitude—and, it ſhall be eternal.

The richeſt treaſure of religion is the aſſured expectation of a bleſſed immortality. The moſt comfortable hope of the ſinner would be to ceaſe to exiſt at death, and to be forever blotted out of the works of God whoſe juſtice he has made his enemy. Even this diſmal conſolation is denied him, and he is forced to tremble with fearful apprehenſions of his approaching doom. But when vice has not made it our intereſt to ſeek a refuge from greater miſeries in annihilation, it is a bottomleſs gulph into which the mind looks with horror. Life derives a new and augmented reliſh from the expectation of future happineſs. And the proſpects of piety beyond the grave are filled with unutterable conſolations. "In the preſence of God is fullneſs of joy, and at his right hand are pleaſures forever more."* In the boſom of the earth ſhall be depoſited all the imperfections of human nature.—The body ſhall ariſe again from the duſt, at the laſt day, adorned with immortal beauty,

* Pſalms xvi.

and the ſoul ſhall be furniſhed with celeſtial powers. Her habitation ſhall be near the throne of God, in the manſions of angels, and of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect. Her felicity ſhall be everlaſting like the nature of God from whom it flows. As it ſhall know no period, it ſhall alſo know no change, but the changes of perpetual improvement. The ſoul, contemplating theſe boundleſs and glorious proſpects, is often loſt in holy tranſport. The pains and griefs of life, which are only haſtening to us the bleſſed moment of poſſeſſion, loſe in a great meaſure, their power to afflict us. And the terrors of the grave itſelf are forgotten in the *deſire* of the believer *to depart and be with Chriſt, which is far better.*" "Amen! even ſo, come Lord Jeſus!"

How bleſſed, then, is the portion of thoſe who love God, and are found in the way of his commandments! "The ſtatutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart. More to be deſired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; ſweeter alſo than honey and the honey-comb. And in keeping of them there is great reward."*

* Pſalms xix. 8—10, 11.

The truth, to the illuſtration of which we have attended, forms one of the ſtrongeſt recommendations of ſincere piety to every wiſe and reaſonable perſon. The great purſuit of man is happineſs. And in religion alone is it to be found, which hath "the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."* Experience muſt have convinced the moſt of you, my brethren, that the purſuits of the world, and the paſſions that connect us only with the vain and fluctuating things of time, have not rendered you happy. They fed you with deluſive hopes, while they have embittered life with real pains. The phantoms of joy glided before you. And, in the moment that you thought you were about to embrace them, you graſped an empty ſhadow, or pierced your boſom with a laſting ſting. If pleaſures diſappointed, paſſions corroded the heart. Your intereſts and inclinations have been continually thwarted and wounded by the rival intereſts and inclinations of others. But religion points out to you a peaceful and delightful path in which no intereſt can interfere with

* I. Timothy iv. 8.

yours; for the intereſts of all are the ſame —no corroding paſſion can wound the tranquility of your boſom—no flattering joy can diſappoint you: but every thing in time and in eternity, on earth and in heaven ſhall concur to promote your felicity. Beyond the grave, where the hopes, and the works of ſinners ſhall be forever conſumed, the pleaſures of piety ſhall only begin to ripen, and attain their compleat perfection. The primitive beauties, and the innocent delights of Paradiſe ſhall be reſtored with boundleſs increaſe in that celeſtial Eden into which Chriſt ſhall tranſplant man redeemed when he ſhall create the univerſe anew.

On the whole review of religion, whether we regard the future, or the preſent, we ſhall find that, *in keeping the commandments of God there is great reward*—Chriſtians! cultivate its happy temper in your own ſouls. Invite mankind to its ſervice by the image of its happineſs in you. Shew them the fair example of a mind at peace with itſelf, and with God; occupied with pure and ſpiritual delights as much above the power of the world to take away as to

beſtow; and waiting, with tranquil and cheerful reſignation, the bleſſed moment that ſhall diſſolve its ties with earth, and tranſlate it to a glorious and immortal ſtate of felicity in the Heavens.

AMEN!

DISCOURSE XII.

ON SECRET FAULTS.

PSALM CXIX. 12.

Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults!

HUMAN Nature is covered with imperfection. Conſcience daily denounces to us errors and follies in our conduct, the guilt of which is ſo ſtrongly marked, that we cannot forbear to acknowlege and condemn them. But, a much greater number, in the haſty and ſuperficial glance which, in the midſt of buſineſs, or of pleaſure, we throw on life, eſcape our obſervation—many, when we come to look back upon our own hiſtory, and examine our conduct, have paſſed from our remembrance—and many more are covered from the cenſure of our own minds by that partiality to whatever is attached to ourſelves even by a remote relation, that is among the moſt dangerous weakneſſes of human nature.—

Sins of this kind, forgotten, unobſerved, or juſtified and covered by ſelf-love, are, by the ſacred writer in the text, denominated *ſecret faults.*

As it is of high importance to lay open, as far as poſſible, every ſource of humility that ſhould affect a good man at the throne of grace, and to expoſe to all men the hidden and unſuſpected errors of their lives, I ſhall endeavor, in the preſent diſcourſe, to diſcloſe their principal cauſes and ſprings. From each of theſe we may derive many facts and truths that may be profitably applied for the examination of our hearts, and the regulation of our conduct. They may be compriſed under the heads of ignorance—of ſelf-love—of a corrupted ſtate of public manners—of vicious habits—and of falſe principles.

I. In the firſt place ignorance is a fruitful ſource of faults that, from their very cauſe muſt be unknown to ourſelves. In an uninformed mind, the paſſions, uncontrouled by principle, will be continually gathering ſtrength—and every criminal impulſe haſtens to its object, freed from thoſe

holy and powerful reſtraints which can be impoſed upon it only by an enlightened conſcience. Ignorance, as I here ſpeak of it, reſpects the laws of duty, and the ſyſtem of divine truth contained in the holy ſcriptures. For whatever ſcience a man may poſſeſs, if his knowledge of theſe is defective, his heart is, in the ſame proportion, laid open to the influence of temptation, and ſubjected to the dominion of its paſſions. Sound principles of divine truth early received, and permanently fixed in the mind, furniſh the moſt effectual motives to duty, and form the ſtrongeſt fences of virtue.—Ignorance enfeebles and proſtrates both the one and the other. It infallibly leads to vice. Make for it the moſt favorable ſuppoſition that it is the ſubject of religious impreſſion—it is liable to the falſe fervors, and the crimes of fanaticiſm which it exalts into virtues, or it ſinks into a vain diſcharge of the abſurd and uſeleſs rites and penances of ſuperſtition, which it makes the ſubſtitutes of duty, and the expiation of its ſins. If it is without religious impreſſion, it is prone to plunge into the gulph of profligacy, and to abandon itſelf to the unreſtrained indul-

gence of every vice, to which propenſity, example, or habit invites. Is not a great part of the reproachful idleneſs, the groſs profanity, the ſhameleſs intemperance and obſcenity that ſo often diſgrace the inferior orders of ſociety, and offend our eyes, and wound our ears even in the public ſtreets, to be aſcribed to that defect of principle and inſtruction that leaves the mind without a clear light to guide its conduct, or a faithful monitor to reſtrain its exceſſes? Thoſe who are leaſt informed, indeed, cannot be wholly ignorant of the evil of theſe vices, but, unacquainted with the holineſs and extent of the divine law, the high degree of their criminality is, in a great meaſure, unknown to them. They are covered with the guilt of *ſecret faults*, and are ſinking into perdition, unconſcious of the load that is preſſing them down. Will ignorance, according to the falſe hopes of ſinners, exculpate the conſcience? Invincible ignorance might; but ignorance of duty in the midſt of our lights, ariſing, as it does, from a criminal abuſe of reaſon, or a criminal neglect of the means of information, can only aggravate the guilt of our offences. But ſins of ignorance, and this is a truth

that, in a particular manner, claims the attention of every ſerious mind, are not chargeable on the profligate and uninſtructed alone, but, from the imperfection of human nature, adhere, in a degree, to the beſt of men, and furniſh a ſubject of humility to the moſt eminent ſaints—ſins that ſpring from infirmity or neglect by which a thouſand fugitive thoughts eſcape attention, a thouſand habitual ideas and emotions riſe in the heart and paſs away again without ever being examined, or compared with the great ſtandard of duty in the word of God. Sins that ariſe from partial and limited views of the extent and ſanctity of the divine law, and finally, ſins that ariſe from mingling with the law of God the errors of our own reaſon, or the prejudices of a miſtaken education. "Who can underſtand his errors?" The veil that covers the heart is ſometimes lifted up, and we diſcern in ourſelves evils that we had not ſuſpected. But when we have ſeen all that human weakneſs ever ſees, innumerable *vain thoughts* will ſtill lodge within us undiſcovered, and form a ſubject of daily humility and repentance at the throne of grace.

II. Another ſource of ſecret faults is found in the dangerous influence of ſelf-love.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked, who can know it?" Its deceitfulneſs has been a ſubject of complaint to good men in all ages. Hardly is there a foible, or a vice of character which it is not able to palliate, or to conceal. Daily we ſee it exemplified in the diſcourſes and conduct of others, and they, doubtleſs, perceive it in us. But, in innumerable inſtances, its effects are ſo ſubtle that neither they nor we diſcern them.—Every propenſity of nature, in proportion to its ſtrength, furniſhes us with proofs of this influence; but, of all the principles of ſelf-deceit pleaſure is the moſt powerful, and opens the wideſt field for thoſe impoſitions which men are daily paſſing upon themſelves. They are eaſily deceived where they already wiſh to be deceived. Whatever yields them pleaſure they are ſtudious to juſtify. All the ſalacies of reaſon are muſtered up to defend the favorite indulgence, and to overcome thoſe ſcruples that fill the mind, and oppoſe themſelves to the firſt approaches of vice. And no conclu-

ſions ought we to ſuſpect more than thoſe which after much thought and attention, we finally drew on the ſide of our inclinations. The greater pains we have taken, the more various the lights to which we have turned the favorite idea, and the more ſubtlety and refinement we have uſed in framing our ultimate judgment on the caſe, the farther, perhaps, we have erred from the truth. Theſe anxious reſearches, theſe ingenious reaſonings, inſtead of being a fair and candid enquiry after truth, may be nothing more than the efforts which ſelf-love is making to juſtify indulgence. There is ſcarcely any degree of guilt which this principle will not cover or excuſe. "All the ways of a man are right in his own eyes." Hence the ſcience of ſelf-knowlege is rendered above all others difficult and obſcure: and however deeply we may penetrate the *miſtery of iniquity* in our hearts, an unfathomable abyſs will ſtill remain in the errors and the blindneſs of a diſhoneſt ſelf-love, which we can never ſufficiently explore.

III. General example, likewiſe, frequently contributes to render our faults ſecret,

and unknown to ourſelves, by taking off from the mind that impreſſion of guilt, or abating that ſentiment of abhorrence which vice is apt to produce when it is more rarely ſeen.

In conſequence of that myſterious ſympathy by which men are drawn together, and formed on each others character and model, they ſlide inſenſibly into manners that are continually preſented to view in the public example. Cuſtom they confound in their ideas with propiety. And, in a thouſand inſtances, we daily ſee folly loſe its impertinence, and frivolity, deformity, and even vice ceaſe to diſguſt when recommended and juſtified by faſhion. The beſt of men frequently perceive their zeal for the glory of God, and the higheſt intereſts of human nature, languiſh through the lukewarmneſs and formality that have invaded the great body of their fellow-chriſtians. They contract ſome taint in their own manners from the general licence in the midſt of which they live. "Becauſe iniquity abounds the love of many waxes cold." If they have been accuſtomed to ſee the ſabbath violated, do they not with leſs ſcruple, themſelves in-

fringe upon its holy reſt? If they are ſurrounded by ſcenes of levity and diſſipation, frequented by thoſe with whom, on other grounds, they are in the habits of intimacy, are they not liable to ſuffer from the contagion of that contaminated ſociety? If they habitually hear the ſacred name of the Majeſty of Heaven inſulted and profaned, is not the horror of the cuſtomary impiety leſſened in their eſteem? Is not the ſpirit of the world, by the force of numbers and example, making daily inroads upon the pure and heavenly ſpirit of piety? The conſcience is rendered leſs ſcrupulous and tender by the frequency of ſeeing vice. Indulgences that will not bear the rigorous teſt of reaſon and the word of God come at laſt to be regarded merely as innocent compliance with the manners of the world. Numbers and faſhion become a kind of pledge for the innocence of every practice upon which they impreſs their ſtamp. Mankind are prone to judge of the truth of opinions, and the propriety of conduct more from cuſtom than from reaſon—more from the example of others than from the reſults of their own ſerious inveſtigation, and the intimate conviction of their own breaſts.—

From this error good men are not wholly exempted; and example becomes even to them, and much more to others, a fruitful source of *secret faults.* "Evil communication corrupts good manners," and, at the same time, hides the corruption from the eye of conscience. The greater part of the world follow just as they are led—active minds prevail over the indolent, and the daring over the weak—and the multitude of sinners resign their conscience and their conduct to the direction of men more criminal than themselves. Ah! it is not by the customs of men but by the law of God that we should judge our hearts. How many sins, that are now hidden from our view by the predominant influence of custom and example, will be disclosed to us by affliction that strips the false and seductive colouring from the world—by the approach of death that draws forth from beneath every covering and disguise the inmost principles of the heart—by the penetrating light of eternity that, shed upon the soul in the article of dying, searches and reveals its deepest, and its darkest recesses. Oh! how vain are the opinions and example of men, which are made the encouragement and justification

of ſo many faults, when weighed againſt the law and the judgment of God. A good man, ſenſible of his frailty and his danger, will daily confeſs and deplore the evils that may be concealed from his view by this unhappy influence, and will ſtudiouſly diſentangle truth from the vain faſhions of opinion, and of manners with which it is combined, and by which it is diſtorted. But, ſinners, reſting upon the multitude of their fellow ſinners, are contented to wrap themſelves up in a fatal ſecurity till God comes at length to rent the veil that covers their crimes, and to ſhed upon them the dreadful and conſuming light of his juſtice.

IV. Another cauſe of ſecret faults may be found in the effects of habit.

Propenſities or actions that have become habitual we are apt to confound with the original tendencies of nature, and, equally, to aſcribe them to the author of our being. They operate almoſt without our thinking of them; and men ſeldom take the pains to examine their rectitude, or their relations to the divine law. If any faults, therefore, have gradually grown up with them, and

become incorporated into their manners, they are rarely, and with difficulty cured—they are hardly ſeen as faults.

Habits advance by ſuch inſenſible degrees that it is difficult to remark their progreſs. They ſteal us imperceptibly away from the fountain of truth, and the ſtandard of perfection. And when once we begin to yield to the tendencies of corrupted nature, or to the ſtream of faſhionable vice, even good men may ſometimes be borne far down the ſilent and contaminated current before they are aware, till ſome palpable miſcarriage awaken their ſleeping conſcience, and oblige them to remount to the ſource of the evil in order to purify it. David could not have paſſed at once from thoſe ſublime and pious fervors that glow in his ſacred compoſitions, and ſtill animate the devotions of the church, to that act of groſs ſenſuality and injuſtice that was the ſtain of his life, and embittered to him the remainder of his days: gradually he muſt have yielded to the temptations of his fortune—the habits of pleaſure muſt have inſenſibly ſtolen upon him, till, in an unſuſpecting moment, they plunged him into the gulph, and, by his mi-

feries, recalled him to himſelf, and reſtored the obliterated ſentiments of duty on his heart.

Habit has likewiſe a paſſive influence upon the ſoul that greatly contributes to this dangerous effect. Of this influence every day furniſhes us with innumerable proofs. Cuſtomary appearances attract little attention, and cuſtomary actions are performed almoſt without thought. Hence vices, which are common in ſociety, and which enter into the character and manners of a people, come, at length, to be viewed with a kind of indifference even by a good man, which may expoſe him, at ſome times, to be betrayed into criminal compliances with them. Hence faults that have entered into our own habits are ſlightly remarked, if they are remarked at all, and they ſpeedily paſs into an oblivion from which they are never recalled. Theſe forgotten ſins, however, leave upon the conſcience an indelible taint; and, not improbably, prove the cauſe of many of thoſe ſtrokes and chaſtiſements in the courſe of divine providence of which we do not diſcern the immediate cauſe, nor the end.

V. Another and much more pernicious ſource of faults of this kind is to be found in falſe principles.

The innocence of error, ſays a great writer,* is the maſter prejudice of the preſent age. And a falſe and dangerous maxim has, perhaps, been too generally received, that it is of ſmall moment what *principles* in morals and religion men may embrace, it is *conduct* alone which we are to regard; as if conduct could be ſafely, or was in reality ever ſeparated from principles. It is a truth eſtabliſhed upon the ſoundeſt reaſon, and demonſtrated by conſtant experience, that practice and principles have a cloſe and intimate relation, and a powerful influence upon one another. Whole nations have had their character and manners formed by the ſpirit of their legiſlation, and the maxims of their education. And certain doctrines are daily, among the wiſe and learned, vindicated or refuted by the conſequences that are ſuppoſed to reſult from them. Do we not ſee that looſe manners and licentious opinions tend to beget one

* Warburton, Biſhop of Glouceſter.

another? The corruption of manners among the Greeks and Romans, in the decline of their republics, gave univerſal extenſion to the diſſolute doctrines of the epicurean philoſophy—and it is acknowledged by their own writers that the prevalence of that philoſophy haſtened and augmented the degeneracy of the public morals.* The ſame voluptuous principles, with little variation, have been revived in modern times, and the ſame pernicious effects have reſulted from them. Judge ye what manners will be produced by that ſyſtem which repreſents man as being merely an organized ſyſtem of matter made to periſh and be reproduced under other forms like ſucceſſive crops of vegetables, the ſole end of whoſe being, and the only reaſonable object of whoſe purſuit is ſenſual pleaſure.† Every reſtraint is, by ſuch doctrines, removed from the paſſions, every encouragement is given to vice. To what purpoſe are the ſelf-denials of virtue if we periſh forever at death, and if we ſhall meet, beyond the grave, with no reward worthy of its ſacrifices? If

* See particularly Polybius book vi. for an account of its effect among the Greeks.

† Helvetius.

appetite alone furniſhes the chief good of man, how ſhould honor, friendſhip, juſtice, or religion, ſtand in the way of its gratification? Such falſe and pernicious principles tend, not only to promote vice; they cover and protect it likewiſe from the cenſure of our own conſcience. Would you ſee in its extent the criminal conduct that may ſpring from a brutal philoſophy that thus ſenſualizes the ſoul?—Examine the hiſtory of thoſe men who have been its moſt zealous and diſtinguiſhed advocates. Groſs and ſhameful often is their public conduct; but their ſecret hiſtory preſents ſcenes of vice, from which piety and virtue muſt turn away with horror. Nothing can exceed the licentiouſneſs, the hypocriſy, the baſeneſs, the treachery, the cruelty, the total dereliction of humanity and virtue, of which many of the adepts of an impious philoſophy have ſhewn themſelves to be capable.* Yet, in their principles do they find the juſtification of their crimes, and they ſeem to poſſeſs the fatal art of perſuading them-

* See the hiſtory of the illuminatti in Germany and France, by John. Robiſon, profeſſor of Nat. Phil. in the univerſity of Edinburg; a work that deſerves to be read by every friend to virtue and religion, who is ſolicitous to penetrate into the cauſes of the preſent prevalence of vice and infidelity.

ſelves of their own innocency. As one example, let me call to your recollection a work but too well known, and yet, among the leaſt criminal of thoſe efforts that have lately been made to corrupt all moral principles—I mean *the confeſſions of Rouſſeau.* They exhibit to us innumerable follies, the eternal caprices of a reſtleſs, fickle, and ungovernable temper, the culpable fruits of paſſions always exceſſive, many very low, and many very ſhameful vices. Yet, we ſee him, in the introduction of that extraordinary recital, preſume, with an audacity that ſhocks the pious mind, to preſent the hiſtory of his infamy at the throne of the eternal, and to juſtify his crimes to his creator and his judge who had given him his paſſions. "Let the laſt trumpet, ſaith he, ſound when it will, I will advance with this book in my hand, to preſent myſelf before the ſupreme judge—I will boldly ſay, behold what I have done! Here is what I thought! this is what I have been!"—This man's principles muſt have formed to him, the juſtification of ſo many crimes—They muſt, at leaſt, have concealed from him their turpitude and guilt, or he could not have dar-

ed, with ſuch ſhameleſs honeſty, to blazon his diſgrace before the face of the world.

Men, who are not ſeeking apologies for their vices, may, under a miſtaken ſenſe of duty, be guilty of high offences againſt piety and againſt humanity. "The time ſhall come, ſaid the Saviour to his diſciples, when he that killeth you ſhall think that he doth God ſervice." And the apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of himſelf before he had embraced the faith of the goſpel, ſays, "I verily thought with myſelf that I *ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus of Nazareth." Much more are they liable to errors in their conduct of inferior moment from the falſe principles which the frailty of reaſon and the prejudices of education frequently mingle with the religious ſyſtems of the beſt of men.—They maintain, perhaps, the baſis of divine truth; but they erect upon it a ſuperſtructure, in many inſtances, incorporated with errors of greater or leſs magnitude. In whatever degree ſuch errors exiſt, in the ſame proportion is the ſpirit of their piety impaired, and the ſyſtem of their virtues rendered imperfect. According to the figure of the apoſtle, *if they build on the ſolid foundation*

of the goſpel, wood, hay, ſtubble, that is, any erroneous principles that lead to an unholy practice, *their works ſhall be burnt, but themſelves ſhall be ſaved yet ſo as by fire*—the fire ſhall conſume all the falſe additions that have been made to this rock of ages which ſupports the faith and hope of every real believer. Yet, till the day when the fire ſhall try them, the miſtaken profeſſors of the goſpel may not only remain blind to the imperfections of their own character, but even flatter themſelves with the idea of their innocence or their merit.—Ah! who can underſtand his errors! Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults?

As the claſs of evils of which I have been treating is capable of being ſo much increaſed by ignorance of our duty, and of the innumerable and delicate relations which we ſuſtain to our Creator, and to one another, permit me, in the remarks which I deſign to make, in the concluſion of this diſcourſe, to call your attention, in the firſt place, to the importance of early inſtruction upon theſe neceſſary ſubjects.—Men, in the beginning of life, and before their habits are formed, more frequently fail in their

duty from want of information, than from any natural malignity of heart. It is only a mind that has already made conſiderable progreſs in vice that can deliberately violate its own clear and certain ſentiments of right and wrong. An enlightened conſcience impoſes the moſt effectual reſtraints upon the paſſions, which are the principles of evil in man. It unfolds the law on each caſe of conduct as it ariſes, and adds to the preſcriptions of duty, the moſt powerful motives of obedience. Hence it is that *faith*, not, as the enemies of religion aſſert, a blind belief of uncertain facts, and unintelligle myſteries, but a clear underſtanding, and firm perſuaſion of the truths of the goſpel, is laid, by the apoſtles, at the foundation of a good life, and thereby made the condition of our ſalvation. The moſt intimate relations ſubſiſt between duty and truth—And the principal value of truth is that it leads to duty.

This courſe of education ſhould commence from our earlieſt years. The human character is forming from the firſt moment the ſenſes begin to act. And it is of high conſequence that nothing but the moſt juſt

ideas, and the pureſt principles of truth ſhould be inſtilled into the minds of children, and the moſt amiable examples of virtue exhibited before them. "Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." "The word of God will be a light to his feet and a lamp to his path." "It is like a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces"—it will diſſolve it and mould it into any ſhape.

The defect of early inſtruction in the principles of piety and virtue is productive of great and innumerable evils. The prophet Hoſea attributes to it the corruption of manners in the nation of Iſrael; and, after an affecting enumeration of their crimes,* he adds, "my people are deſtroyed for lack of knowlege."—Both age and youth which would make progreſs in the honourable courſe of virtue, and finally attain to *perfect holineſs in the fear of God*, ſhould diligently *ſearch the ſcriptures*, and ſtudy, by all means, to enlarge their acquaintance with theſe pure and infallible oracles of truth. Let

* Hoſea iv. 1—6.

them be your *meditation all the day;* and, from their precious ſtores of knowlege and inſtruction draw all the rules of your conduct.

2. The tendency of ſelf-love to deceive us in the eſtimate which we make of our own character, and to cover many errors in our conduct, renders it neceſſary that we ſhould often enter profoundly into the principles of the heart, and the motives of our actions, and that we ſhould be able to diſcriminate the characters of genuine piety from all the falſe pretences, and plauſible appearances of virtue with which we are prone to confound them. By a candid and faithful examination of ourſelves we may be able to diſcover and correct many ſecret faults that would otherwiſe defile the conſcience. For this purpoſe, often retire apart from the world where ſelf-love is ſtrengthened by every object that awakens the paſſions, and where cares and pleaſures continually call us out of ourſelves. Frequently ſeek that holy ſolitude, in order to converſe with your hearts, where none ſhall be preſent beſides God and yourſelves.—Strengthen there your own honeſty in this

important duty by the conſciouſneſs of his pure and inſpecting eye, and by the recollection of the account which we muſt render at his bar. Judge yourſelves with the ſame ſpirit with which you ſhall be judged. It is a duty preſcribed by reaſon, as well as enjoined by the word of God. *Know thyſelf* was the moſt famous maxim of ancient wiſdom—and, in ſuch eſtimation was it held by the moſt enlightened people in the univerſe that they inſcribed it over the entrance to the moſt ſacred of their temples.* The holy ſcriptures preſs and repeat it again and again—"Examine yourſelves whether you be in the faith—prove your own ſelves—know ye not your own ſelves how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you except ye be reprobates?" It is a duty abſolutely requiſite in order to underſtand our *ſecret faults*, and to remove that maſk from the heart by which the power of ſelf-deceit is able to conceal from men their true character. Search and try your ways—and, in fulfilling this great duty, remember that you ſhall ſhortly be tried at a higher bar by the righteous judge of quick and dead. And do thou O Lord

* The temple at Delphi.

mercifully reveal to us the faults that will ſtill be covered from our own view! *Search us, and know our hearts, try us, and know our thoughts, and ſee if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlaſting.*

3. The reflections to which you have attended admoniſh you likewiſe to be on your guard againſt the dangerous influence of faſhion and example. Faſhion draws after it manners and opinions by a ſilent and powerful charm. And each age has its peculiar modes of thinking and acting. Whatever, therefore, is recommended by general example we ought to examine with peculiar ſcrupuloſity, not only becauſe we are prone to ſlide into the imitation of it with an incautious facility, but becauſe general manners, in the preſent age, have departed far from the purity and ſimplicity of the goſpel. The ſtream of faſhion ſeems, indeed, to a certain diſtance, to co-incide with that of piety and virtue; but then inſenſibly ſeparating from it, it bears away thoſe who, without caution, commit themſelves to its current. Scrutinize all your actions, not by what others do, or permit, but by the word of God, which is the infal-

lible teſt of rectitude and truth.—Ah! how often, in this period of general licence, and relaxation of morals, hath a ſecret infection reached your hearts from that contaminated influence in the midſt of which you live? How often hath the ſpirit of the world, carried into your moſt holy devotions, left the heart ſtill barren and cold at the throne of grace? How often have criminal, or, doubtful compliances with its manners left a ſecret taint upon the conſcience, and invited others to receive with indifference or contempt a religion that departed ſo little from their own habits?—Learn then to fear the infectious commerce of the world—Retire from the midſt of that example, and of thoſe ſocieties which you find by experience to impair the holineſs and integrity of your walk with God.—Do you aſk where is the forbidden limit? for, to a certain degree, we may innocently conform to the world. It is difficult to aſcertain it by any univerſal rule—One criterion however is ſufficiently ſure, the moment that you perceive the fervor of your affections towards your Creator, your Saviour, and the objects of your duty beginning to abate, the moment that you find yourſelf obliged to excuſe, or be-

ginning to make apologies to your own hearts for certain liberties, that moment you have already gone too far.

If the contagion of fashion, and sympathy with the public manners, are able sometimes to lead established christians into sin, much more are youth, thoughtless, gay, easily attracted by every object of pleasure, and susceptible of dangerous impressions from every companion with whom they meet, liable to corruption from the ill examples that are every where presented to their view. Seduced by a contagious sympathy with such associates, enflamed with dissolute pleasure they are hurried on in a thoughtless career; or, if they ever think, it is only to invent apologies for their vices, and to find means to hide their real character from themselves. They envelope themselves in the mists of their passions, and think they are concealed also from the eye of God. Ah! the thunders of divine justice are collecting above that dark cloud that intercepts your sight, and, in the moment of your greatest security they may burst forth—*when you are saying peace and safety! sudden destruction shall come upon you.* In the judgment of God,

your *ſecret faults* ſhall appear to be manifeſt crimes, and all the deceitfulneſs of ſin ſhall be ſtript off before his holy and impartial tribunal.

With one more admonition I conclude this diſcourſe. Beware of falſe principles in religion. I ſpeak not now of thoſe atrocious doctrines in philoſophy that proſtrate all religion, and cover the moſt enormous vices under an appearance of reaſon. I ſpeak only of principles adopted by the friends of piety that ſpring out of the errors of their own underſtanding, but, mingled with the purity and ſimplicity of the goſpel, tend to corrupt it. From the prejudices of education, and from a vain confidence in the powers of reaſon they are prone to confound certain notions and abſtractions of their own minds with the plain and ſimple doctrines of revelation, and out of the whole to compoſe one heterogeneous maſs. Their own ſpeculations, they too often make the baſis of their ſyſtem; and inſtead of conforming their reaſonings with the divine word, they bend this ſacred ſtandard into a compliance with their preconceived ideas. This ſpirit

has introduced various corruptions into the chriſtian church, and, by the aſcendency which it has given to the vain and arrogant pretenſions of reaſon beyond its proper ſphere, has haſtened the extenſion of an impious philoſophy. For, the moment that reaſon forſakes the guidance of revelation, and thoſe obvious and univerſal ſentiments and feelings of human nature upon which the evidence of revelation is founded, there is no point of reſt till it has deſtroyed all truth, and arrived at a frightful atheiſm.—Every departure from the divine ſimplicity of the goſpel, every mixture of falſe ſcience with its pure and heavenly light, tends to obſcure its luſtre, and to impair its ſanctifying effect upon the heart. Blind and erring as we are, and ſubject to innumerable prejudices, ariſing chiefly from the influence of the paſſions, every addition which we make to the ſimple word of God will, too probably, become the nurſe of ſome vice, or foible of character, and mar the beauty and conſiſtency of our chriſtian profeſſion —it covers, under the maſk of a profeſſion, many *ſecret faults*. And according as the various ſects of religion approach, or decline from this ſtandard we ſee them diſtin-

guiſhed from one another by the different degrees of their ſanctity, by the ſpirit of their morals, and even by their manners.

Friendly, from the whole view which we have taken of this ſubject, let me recall to your moſt ſerious conſideration the profound humility that becomes us before the throne of grace on account of our manifold and ſecret imperfections. The language of the holy Pſalmiſt, will be that of every ſincere and penitent believer—"Innumerable evils have compaſſed me about—mine iniquities have taken hold upon me ſo that I am not able to look up—they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me."—How many ſins have eſcaped our knowlege or obſervation, even in the moment of committing them? How many, on a review of life, have eſcaped our recollection? How many have been overlooked through the impoſing influence of cuſtom and general example? How many have been covered by the deceitfulneſs of ſelf-love? How many have paſſed for innocent conformities with the laws of nature, or have even been miſtaken for virtues through the effect

of falſe principles? Ah! *Who can underſtand his errors? We are altogether as an unclean thing! Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away! Cleanſe us O Lord, from ſecret faults! Keep back thy ſervants alſo from preſumptuous ſins!*

AMEN!

DISCOURSE XIII.

ON PUBLIC VICES.

PSALM XIX. 13.

Keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins.

PRESUMPTUOUS SINS form a comprehenſive claſs of evils, and embrace all known and deliberate acts of vice. They require no other deſcription, and are evidently placed by the ſacred writer, in contraſt with *ſecret faults* which eſcape the knowledge and obſervation of our own minds. They are ſtiled *preſumptuous* on account of that hardineſs, and inſolence of heart which they manifeſt; for, not only have they thrown off the reverence which we owe to that judge which God hath ſeated in our own breaſts; but they inſult the authority of his holy law, and ſet at defiance the terrors of his juſtice with which he hath armed it.

Of this clafs of fins, for the conviction, and, if poffible, the reformation of the guilty, it is my defign to treat. And, that I may render the illuftration the more clear, and ufeful, I fhall divide them into feveral degrees, and endeavour, in fome meafure, to trace their progreffion.—They are fuch fins as are committed againft the light and conviction of our own minds—they are aggravated by the abufe of great and diftinguifhing mercies—or by infenfibility, or a fpirit of revolt under the judgments and corrections of divine providence—they have attained their ultimate progreffion when they come to be committed without fhame—and, efpecially when they difcover a zeal to enfnare, feduce, and corrupt others.

I. They are, in the firft place, committed againft the light and conviction of our own minds.

This character embraces every grade of them—if it extends to the higheft, it reaches, alfo, the loweft. It is eflential to their nature. This chiefly conftitutes their guilt that they violate the dictates, and remonftrances of confcience. Confcience is our

natural law, and our natural judge.—It is more—it is the vicegerent of God in the boſom of man. All its dictates point to a higher ſource of duty in his will—all its reproaches point to a higher ſanction in his juſtice. When, therefore we ſin againſt its lights, it is, in the very act, to defy the authority of God our Maker. But no ſmall portion of their guilt conſiſts in their violating that reverence which a man ought to have for himſelf, and the law of his own breaſt. What though the darkneſs may cover him? What though no human eye may perceive him? He is his own witneſs—that judge is intimately conſcious whom, next to God, he ought to reſpect and fear—before whom crime ſhould tremble, and the impurity of the thoughts ſhould cover him with ſhame.

A good man will cultivate a fine and delicate ſenſibility of conſcience, that he may be able to perceive the minuteſt objects of duty, and diſcern even the remote approaches of vice; and he will ſtudy to illuminate it by all the lights which he can derive from reaſon, from reflection, and the word of God. A wicked man ſeeks only

to blind it, or to blunt its feelings; and, when he can blind it no longer, he hardens himſelf againſt its reproofs. And, is not he a bold and inſolent offender who neither reſpects himſelf, nor fears the judge of the univerſe—who can venture upon acts of acknowledged vice in oppoſition to the conviction of his own mind—to the reproaches of his own heart—to the majeſty and authority of the divine law, and the terrors of a judgment to come?

What then ſhall we ſay of that ſlothful neglect, or irreverent contempt of the houſe of God, and the ordinances of Chriſt which is the diſgrace of a people who call themſelves by his name, and which, in this age of imaginary freedom from the moſt ſacred ties, infects ſo many of the profeſſors of the goſpel? What ſhall we ſay of that intemperance and debauch, the frequent reproach of our ſocial meetings, and even of thoſe conventions of the people, held under the authority of the laws, where the pureſt morals ought to reign in a free country? An intemperance that impairs the health—that waſtes the profits of induſtry—that murders time—that overturns the habits and

principles of virtue—that deſtroys domeſtic peace, and entails miſery and ruin on thoſe who depend upon us? What ſhall we ſay of that injuſtice and fraud that, in ſo many ſhapes, has riſen up among us? Not that which is cognizable by the civil law, and may be remedied by its tribunals, but that which eſcapes the eye and the arm of the law—that criminal ſpeculation that tends, in its progreſs, to proſtrate moral principle, and calls honor and honeſty into the lottery of chances—that unfairneſs in dealing—thoſe iniquitous advantages—thoſe impoſitions on the credulity, the ſimplicity, or the neceſſities of others which can be proved, or puniſhed only at the tribunal of conſcience? What ſhall we ſay of that ludicrous jeſting on the moſt ſacred ſubjects, that indecency and impurity of diſcourſe, which virtue cannot hear without diſguſt, nor delicacy name without a bluſh, that diſhonour the convivial meetings of thoughtleſs youth, and, ſometimes alas! even of profligate age? What ſhall we ſay of that impious profanation of the name of God, and thoſe infernal imprecations that ſo frequently inſult our ears both among the great and the little

vulgar? Juſt God! wilt thou not at length pour out that damnation on the head of the ſinner which he audaciouſly invokes from thy juſtice?—Can men plead principle to vindicate, or ignorance to excuſe theſe crimes? No; they are preſumptuous offences—they are palpable violations of that inward law which God hath placed in the breaſts of man to regulate his conduct.

II. The abuſe of great and diſtinguiſhing mercies conſtitutes another aggravation, and forms a new claſs of preſumptuous offences.

To enjoy the mercies of Heaven without thankfulneſs, eſpecially, when we have been, in any way, diſtinguiſhed by its goodneſs—and, ſtill more, to enjoy them only to abuſe them, is a proof of a depraved mind, and of a baſe and ignoble heart. Ingratitude is an aggravation of preſumption.

Theſe mercies may conſiſt either in external advantages of fortune—in intellectual improvements—or in the means of religious knowledge and inſtruction.

If it hath pleaſed God to put it in the power of ſome men to enjoy the common bleſſing of exiſtence with more dignity and ſatisfaction than others, by crowning them with affluence, or raiſing them to honourable ſtations, are not their vices marked with a guilt proportioned to their miſimproved advantages in life? Yet, how often does the facility of gratifying their paſſions raiſe them above the controul of the laws of God? Perhaps no men are more prone to abuſe his goodneſs, and to turn it againſt himſelf, than thoſe who enjoy it in the greateſt profuſion. A pernicious idleneſs, profligate manners, impiety and licentiouſneſs are at once their ſin, and their diſgrace. "Hear O Heavens! and give ear O Earth! ſaith the Spirit of God, appealing to all nature againſt theſe crimes, I have nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt me!—The *ox* knoweth his owner, and the *aſs* his maſter's crib, but *Iſrael* doth not know, *my people* doth not conſider."

How frequently, likewiſe, are their diſtinctions in ſociety made to foſter a ſpirit of unbecoming pride, inſolent to mankind, and unthankful to Almighty God, as if all

that they enjoyed belonged to them by an independent poſſeſſion; or, were the natural reward of ſuperior worth and merit in themſelves?—What! a worm of duſt! a vain and gorgeous atom proud of the cruſt that it inhabits! proud before the Maker of the univerſe in whoſe preſence all human diſtinctions are annihilated! Blind and impious preſumption! Theſe vain repules pervert the unmerited bounty of Heaven into hoſtility equally againſt God and man.

It is a ſtill higher crime to employ in the ſervice of impiety the advantages of natural talents, or intellectual improvements.

Such talents, or ſuch improvements are capable of being employed to the beſt, or the worſt purpoſes in human life. And the guilt of their miſapplication is to be meaſured both by the good which they have not done, and by the evil of which they have been the active cauſes. What illumination and perſuaſive energy might they not have added to the principles of virtue and piety? What unhappy extenſion and force have they not given to the pernicious cauſe of infidelity and vice? Impious philoſophers!

licentious wits! who ſtudy to ſhake the eternal foundations of truth and morals, and to deſtroy the ſalutary influence of religion on the human mind! how many crimes, not your own, will at laſt be imputed to you!

It is a lamentable proof of the corruption of human nature that the powers of genius, which ſhould diſcover to man his own imperfection, and the profound and unfathomable depths of the divine wiſdom, ſhould ſo often ſerve only to intoxicate the heart, and to inflate it with vanity—ſhould, inſtead of proving the bleſſing, prove the curſe of mankind, by unſettling the principles of ſociety and morals—nay, ſhould carry this preſumption ſo far as to attack the eternal ſource of light and truth itſelf, and place in its room the faint and dubious ſpark of their own reaſon. Ah! vain and purblind reaſon! It reſembles a proud inſect which, becauſe it can emit a feeble and deceptive luſtre in the dark, ſhould pretend to eclipſe the ſun by the ſtrength of its beam, and ſay, *I* will enlighten the univerſe.——Children of ignorance and vanity! the light of eternity ſhall bring a

dreadful refutation of your errors—the croud of victims to your deluſions that you will meet there, while they demonſtrate your guilt with a fearful evidence, will add augmented horrors to your condemnation!

To our abuſed mercies let us add the more common but ineſtimable bleſſing of the ordinances and inſtructions of the goſpel —The lights and the motives which they add to duty greatly aggravate the guilt of thoſe ſinners who violate or who deſpiſe them. Hard muſt be the heart which reſiſts the counſels of divine wiſdom, and the invitations of divine mercy propoſed in the goſpel. And the truth is, that thoſe who have broken through the reſtraints, and eradicated the principles of a pious education uſually become diſtinguiſhed in vice.—They are quoted by ſinners to the reproach of religion, as they often become the reproach of human nature.——A ſinner enjoying the light of the goſpel, ſins againſt the ſtrong conviction of his own mind—againſt the authority of the divine law moſt clearly interpreted in the church—againſt the high and intereſting proſpects of eternity continually preſented to his mind in the in-

ſtitutions of religion—and againſt the majeſty and juſtice of God armed to enforce his law, and to puniſh its violation. But, that which chiefly enhances his guilt, is the abuſe of the divine mercy ſo illuſtriouſly diſplayed to the world in the croſs of Chriſt, and the profanation of his moſt precious blood. Deſpiſed mercy is often more fearful in its effects than inſulted juſtice. When the preſumption of impiety rejects the bleſſed victim of the croſs, is it not boldly to invoke upon its own head thoſe dreadful flames that have conſumed in our room the *Lamb of God?*

III. Inſenſibility under ſignal judgments of divine providence, or a ſpirit of revolt under its ſtrokes, and corrections, adds to ſinning a character of high preſumption.

Judgment, as well as mercy is intended for the reformation, and the cultivation of mankind. Frequently, when the goodneſs of God has ceaſed to make its proper impreſſion upon a hard and impenitent heart, the ſtrokes of his juſtice have at length brought it to reflection. It is ſtated by the holy-ſpirit, as a character of incorrigible and

hopeleſs impenitence in the nation of Iſrael, that the divine chaſtiſements were no longer able to reclaim them. "Why, ſaith he, ſhould you be ſtricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is ſick, the whole heart is faint." What ſhall we ſay, then, of thoſe who can deliberately return from following their fellow ſinners to the duſt, whither they ſhall themſelves be ſoon conveyed, to all their cuſtomary follies, and habitual vices? What ſhall we ſay of thoſe who have their hearts torn by the moſt painful bereavements, and their hopes blaſted or their fortunes broken by a frowning providence, who never ſeriouſly conſider the hand that ſmites them, that they may break off their ſins by repentance, nor lay to heart the vanity of the world that they may *return to God as their exceeding joy?* What ſhall we ſay of thoſe who, ſinking under diſeaſes induced by their own intemperance and profligacy, inſtead of being led to repentance by their ſufferings, are ſtill, with their remaining ſtrength, purſuing the ſame crimes? What of thoſe who, raging under their impotence to enjoy their licentious pleaſures, or wiſhing under the pains which thoſe pleaſures have planted in

a ruined conſtitution, murmur at the will of Heaven, rebel againſt the ſtroke, or even blaſpheme their Creator as the author of their miſeries? Is not that a hard heart on which the judgments of God make no pious impreſſion? Is not that a bold and criminal ſpirit that revolts againſt the corrections of a righteous and holy providence, and that will even go from ſuffering under the ſtroke to a repetition of the crime? When the ſinner arrives to deſpiſe the fear of God, he ſeems to be forſaken of the laſt principle by which he might poſſibly be led back to his duty.

IV. Another ſtep in the progreſs of vice is ſeen in the want of ſhame, and contempt of public opinion.

The common intereſts, and therefore the common ſentiments of mankind will ever be connected with the great principles of virtue and good morals. Theſe ſentiments furniſh the moſt powerful motives to order, decency, and propriety of conduct, and form, perhaps, the ſtrongeſt, as well as the moſt delicate ties that connect ſociety together. Laws may be called its chains—

principles and opinions are its ſilken cords. Each ſingly may poſſeſs ſmall force—but, infinitely multiplied and interwoven, they become ſtronger than chains. Nature hath ſubjected us to the ſentiments of one another; and every modeſt and ingenuous mind will profoundly reſpect the opinion of the public. Sinners, who are not yet abandoned, ſtudy to conceal their crimes from public view, and to find for them the protection of obſcurity and retirement. Therefore are they called *the works of darkneſs*, not only becauſe they lead down to *the blackneſs of darkneſs forever*, but becauſe they ſeek for themſelves the deepeſt ſhades to cover them from the eye of the world. In the clouds of night riot and debauchery endeavour to hide their enormities—then theft and robbery come forth from their lurking places—malice and envy ſhoot their arrows in the dark—there luſt ſpreads a veil over its ſhameful and impure myſteries. "In the twilight, ſaith Solomon, in the evening, in the black of dark night," the bait is laid by looſe pleaſure for the unwary youth—"He goeth after her ſtraight way, as the ox goeth to the ſlaughter, or, as a fool to the correction of the ſtocks,

till a dart ſtrike through his liver—as a bird haſteth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."* As long as the ſinner continues to ſeek concealment for his crimes, it is a proof of ſome remaining modeſty of mind that is ſtill capable of reformation. But when vice ſtalks abroad with an unbluſhing face—when intemperance ſtaggers and vociferates in the ſtreets—when fraud and injuſtice can come forth with the countenance of integrity, and ill-gotten wealth is conſidered as a ſubſtitute for honor, and for conſcience—when luſt ſeeks no veil for its orgies, and the moſt criminal connexions are avowed without ſhame, the laſt fences of piety and virtue are broken down, and the mind is prepared to go to any extreme to which appetite may impel, or opportunity invite.

Does the want of ſhame, it may be aſked, mark a higher degree in the progreſs of vice than thoſe characters of it which have been already named—reſiſtance to the authority of conſcience—ingratitude for the mercies of God—and impenitence under

* Proverbs vii. 9, &c.

his corrections?—It does—men are often reſtrained, by a principle of decency, from public and open vice long after they have loſt the fear of God. Accordingly the prophet ſpeaks of it as the conſummation of the crimes of Iſrael, and the ſure preſage of the deſtruction of the nation. "Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh: therefore they ſhall fall among them that fall; at the time that I viſit them they ſhall be caſt down ſaith the Lord."*

But, it is the proof of a ſtill more obdurate mind when the profligate has arrived at the monſtrous vanity of glorying in his ſhame. It is not enough for him to have overcome the modeſty of nature, and to forget, or to deſpiſe the awful cenſure of the world; he hardens his countenance into braſs, inſults the public manners and ſentiments, and braves the terrors of the Supreme Judge of Heaven and earth. Sometimes we ſee the horrid ſpectacle of youth who boaſt their ſcenes of riot and debauchery—

* Jeremiah vi. 15.

who triumph over the innocence they have betrayed—who repeat in the midſt of blaſphemies, their feats of intemperance and licentiouſneſs—who, not contented with ſcaring the night with their crimes, dare to pollute the day with their ſhameful recital—who glory in being beaſts, rather than in being men. Ah! what a corrupted taſte! what hardened hearts!

Another claſs of theſe worthleſs men, equally weak in their underſtandings, and corrupted in their morals, leſt you ſhould ſuſpect them of principle, or of being influenced by any remains of a virtuous and pious education, which they wiſh to be forgotten, boaſt even of vices of which they have not been guilty, and are ambitious of appearing adepts in iniquity before they have been able entirely to ſhake off the power of conſcience, and the modeſty and timidity of their firſt habits. They boaſt of licentious ſcenes, in which they have not been engaged, and of ruined chaſtity which they have never had the effrontery to attempt. Wretches! deſpicable to their companions, and worthy the abhorrence of all good men! even chriſtian charity can hard-

ly forbear to mingle an indignant contempt along with her compaſſion for their deplorable folly.

But to virtue the moſt contemptible, and to piety the moſt afflicting example of this kind, is an old and decrepid ſinner boaſting the profligacy of his youth. When indulgence has loſt its reliſh—when paſſion is no longer an excuſe for folly—when vice has no charms but in remembrance, to ſee the decayed and miſerable remnants of a man exhauſted in the ſervice of ſin, having no reſource within himſelf, and in the affections and hopes of religion, endeavouring to excite his waſted appetites, and to tickle a ſenſual imagination by the recollection of ſcenes of brutal pleaſure, is among the moſt deplorable of all objects. Age glorying in its ſhame ſeems to be the neareſt reſemblance on earth of infernal ſpirits who purſue abſolute wickedneſs without intereſt, and triumph in it without enjoyment.

V. The ultimate degree in that fatal progreſſion of vice which I am endeavouring to trace conſiſts in a zeal to inſnare, ſeduce, and corrupt others.

Activity to extend the principles, and augment the numbers of a party is one of the moſt unequivocal evidences of ſincerity in its cauſe. Many vicious men, contented with being guilty themſelves, are willing to leave the reſt of the world to follow their own inclinations. But the zealous partizans of impiety are ever ready to exert all their talents to give a pernicious extenſion to their corrupted principles. Haſtening to ruin themſelves, they are ſolicitous to draw others with them to the ſame perdition. —Some, through a perverted ſociability, deſire companions in their crimes only to increaſe their own enjoyments. Knowing no other ſatisfactions but thoſe which vice affords, they eſteem religion merely as the reſource of our laſt moments when all the pleaſures of the world are about to forſake us—or the occupation of weak minds who know not how to enjoy life. Having corrupted their taſte to the reliſh of the moſt impure and tainted ſtreams, they are not ſatisfied unleſs they ſtoop to drink of every ſtagnant and filthy puddle that has gathered in their way—others, deriving confidence from aſſociates in guilt, are the more ambitious to diſſeminate the poiſon of their im-

piety. Notwithſtanding their aſſumed audacity, ſomething within ſtill ſecretly miſgives them, and mixes an uneaſy doubt at the bottom of their pleaſures. The apprehenſions of guilt require, the influence of numbers to allay them, and to reſtore confidence to the heart. The ſinner is a coward who often depends for his ſecurity and courage on the example of others. Hence that ſcandalous zeal which the profligate frequently diſcover to ſcatter the contagion of irreligious principles and to ſpread the infection of licentious manners.—But, not a few, ſtill more malignant, ſtudy to corrupt the morals of others through enmity to the pure and humble ſpirit of piety. The bitterneſs of their hearts they vent in keen reproaches, and inſulting ſcoffs—by ſeducing the unwary, and offering themſelves as leaders to thoſe who are yet but juſt entering on the paths of vice. Above all, if they can ſhake the faith of a believer in Chriſt, or corrupt one whoſe firſt inclinations were in favour of religion, with what malicious ſatisfaction they contemplate, or with what inſolent mirth they triumph over, their deluded prey! It is not their own enjoyment which they ſeek in particular acts of vice,

nor the heightened enjoyment which aſſociates in iniquity confer, but they derive an infernal pleaſure from the ruin of innocence itſelf. Their malignity is gratified by being themſelves the inſtruments of corrupting it. —This appears to be the laſt ſtage of impiety upon earth, and contains the moſt open, daring, and criminal hoſtility againſt truth and virtue.

In this claſs of ſinners may be ranked, likewiſe, thoſe numerous writers and artiſts who endeavour to corrupt the public morals by debauching the imagination, or by vitiating the public taſte for amuſement and pleaſure. In the former, we often ſee vice rendered more ſeductive by an enchanting brilliancy of genius. The latter go directly to deprave the heart through the organs of the ſenſes. Seducing images, indecent pictures, looſe ſcenes, and an immodeſt wit contribute their aid to ſpread the infection of vice. Even thoſe low diverſions, which in many places are ſo eagerly ſought after, by aſſembling the idle, the thoughtleſs, and the diſſipated, and debaſing the taſte, are haſtening the degeneracy of manners.—But what ſhall we ſay of thoſe brothels of looſe plea-

ſure, and thoſe places of ruinous gaming where youth ſo often throw away virtue, and honor and eſtate and health? Temples are they of iniquity—houſes of peſtilence whence the moſt dire contagion is ſpread through ſociety. How criminal are the leaders and actors in theſe ſcandalous and corrupting ſcenes! Nor are thoſe who encourage them by their preſence, or ſupport them by their contributions, free from a deep guilt.

To theſe pernicious corrupters of mankind are to be added the pretended philoſophers who, in the preſent age, are ſo aſſiduouſly ſtriving to undermine the foundations both of natural, and of revealed religion. And for what end? Is it for the love of virtue? Alas! the very baſis of virtue is deſtroyed when religion is taken away—Is it, as they ſo often profeſs, through regard to the intereſts of ſociety, and the happineſs of mankind? Ah! ſociety without religion would ſoon become a chaos of paſſions and of crimes. What then is the motive of all this ingenious but perverted induſtry? Is it not to be found in enmity of heart againſt that purity and holineſs

which religion requires? Is it not ſome vice of character that renders them obnoxious to the awful ſanctions of religion. But, whatever it be, no ſins can be more fatal in their conſequences, or draw after them a greater train of ruin. Youth is corrupted —the foundations of ſociety are ſhaken— reverence for the Deity is annihilated—his providence is denied—his juſtice ſet at defiance—his love in the redemption of the world profaned and inſulted—the bleſſed Saviour again rejected of men!—If a zeal to make proſelytes to the pernicious cauſe of impiety and vice is among the higheſt degrees of open and preſumptuous ſinning —if a fatal ſucceſs aggravates the guilt, how criminal are you ye corrupters of the age! If the bleſſing of thoſe who are ready to periſh ſhall come upon the good man who hath contributed to their ſalvation, ſurely upon you ſhall come the blood and the curſe of thouſands who have been deſtroyed by your influence!

The illuſtration of this ſubject has run into ſo great length that your exhauſted time will not permit me to make the numerous reflections that naturally ariſe from it, and

might be profitably improved. I ſhall content myſelf with one or two.

The firſt idea that ſuggeſts itſelf is the inſidious nature, and the dangerous progreſſion of vice. No man becomes abandoned at once. Secret faults precede open, and public vices—and, among theſe laſt there is a wide diſtance between the firſt violations of known duty, and that hardened profligacy which learns at length to ſin without ſhame. Beware, therefore, of the beginnings of vice—they are like the letting out of water which ſoon encreaſes to a mighty flood. Its habits are inceſſantly advancing, and men frequently arrive, in the progreſs of time, calmly to perpetrate crimes on which they would once have looked with a degree of horror. *Break off,* in ſeaſon, *your ſins by repentance, and return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon you, and to our God and he will abundantly pardon you.* But remember that there is a point of impiety beyond which there *is no more ſacrifice for ſins.*——Deplorable is his ſtate who has corrupted, or ſilenced the judge within him—who has torn away all the reſtraints of that internal law in his own

breaſt—who has violated conſcience till it has ceaſed to ſpeak. If he has arrived to ſin in peace, it is only becauſe he is abandoned of God, his peace is the dreadful calm that precedes a ſtorm—and God is preparing the thunders that ſhall avenge his inſulted truth and juſtice. How fearful are his decrees! "Becauſe I have called and ye refuſed. I have ſtretched out my hand and no man regarded—but ye have ſet at naught all my counſel and would none of my reproof, I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you. Then ſhall they call upon me but I will not anſwer, they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me: for that they hated knowlege and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counſel—they deſpiſed all my reproof: therefore they ſhall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."*

It would be in vain to addreſs a reproof or an admonition to thoſe hardened offen-

* Proverbs i. 24—31.

ders who have arrived at the higheſt degrees of vice—who have grown inſenſible to ſhame—who have become apoſtles of impiety, and leaders in profligacy. Seldom are they to be found in the houſe of God. They voluntarily place themſelves beyond the reach of our remonſtrances. I can only hold them up as beacons for your warning.—Ah! my young friends! let not the fatal progreſs of your own follies mark you out hereafter as beacons for the warning of others. Beware of the examples and the ſolicitations to evil that aſſail you on every hand. *The time cometh* ſaith the apoſtle, *when the wicked men and ſeducers ſhall wax worſe and worſe.* Is not that time now? Hardly can youth walk abroad without meeting with criminal objects to invite, dangerous companions to ſolicit, ſcenes of temptation to corrupt them. Ah! how induſtrious are the champions of vice! Inceſſant in their labours to corrupt and to deſtroy—aſſiduous in miſchief, as if they were honeſt men employed in a good cauſe, hardly can you eſcape the innumerable ſnares which they have laid for you. Truſt not thoſe falſe *illuminations* to which the vain pretenders to a monopo-

ly of reaſon have boldly laid claim, while they have only poiſoned the minds of youth, corrupted manners, and torn aſunder all the moral bands of ſociety. Impious fanatics! *illuminated* only to themſelves, and in the viſions of their own fancy! another age will hold them in merited contempt—this age ought to pour upon them that indignation which is due to their multiplied crimes. Retire from the contagion both of their preſumptuous folly, and their *preſumptuous ſins.* And may the *Father of lights* impart to you that *wiſdom that cometh from above, that is pure, and full of good fruits,* for Chriſt's ſake!

AMEN!

DISCOURSE XIV.

ON DEATH.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF THAT INTERESTING EVENT, AND THE PROPER IMPROVEMENT OF IT.

MATTHEW XXIV. 42.

Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord will come.

THE end of the world, and the period of life, to both which events our Saviour in this paſſage ſeems to refer, are equally involved in profound uncertainty; yet is it, perhaps of equal importance that we ſhould always expect them, and always ſtand prepared to meet them. The judgment only announces to the univerſe the ſentence that paſſes upon every ſoul at its ſeparation from the body. The uncertainty of this latter period on which only I wiſh, at preſent, to fix your attention, ought continually to occupy the mind with the moſt intereſting reflections. While the

Bridegroom delays his coming, thoſe who are in waiting, expecting his appearance, ſhould preſerve their lamps trimmed and burning: and the exhortation which he addreſſed to the virgins in the parable he addreſſes to all—*watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord will come.* Yet is there no event which men are more prone to forget—which they ſtudy more to exclude from their thoughts than that which is forever to break their ties with this world, and to fix beyond it their immutable deſtiny. *As it was in the days of Noah*, in the age before the flood, *ſo ſhall it be alſo in the days of the Son of Man*, and ſo is it commonly, in the caſe of each individual, with regard to that ſilent and conſtant flood that is ſweeping before it all the inhabitants of the earth—*they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark: and the flood came and deſtroyed them all.* Men are engaged in buſineſs, or in pleaſure, in the plans of ambition, in the ſchemes of avarice, in the cares of fortune, in the purſuits of amuſement, in the whirl of folly, till approaching, by imperceptible degrees, the

verge of the grave, in one dreadful moment of ſurprize, they plunge into it.

That we ſhall die, is a truth ſo manifeſt, and ſo frequently repeated, that it hath almoſt ceaſed to be felt. And the uncertainty of the time of our departure hence, which ought to keep it ever preſent to our view, is that very circumſtance which human corruption lays hold of to make us forget it altogether.

This fearful *uncertainty* ſhall be the *whole ſubject* of our meditation at preſent.

It is a ſubject, however, ſo frequently treated of, and ſo conſtantly preſented to us in the whole courſe of providence, that nothing new, nothing, indeed, that is not trite can now be ſaid upon it. All that I can hope is to recall to your memory a few of thoſe ideas which you have heard a thouſand times repeated, and to endeavour to give them, if poſſible, a new impreſſion on the heart.

"Of that hour knoweth no man." Accordingly we ſee the feeble and the ſtrong,

the humble and the great, the young and thoſe in middle life, infancy and age mingled promiſcuouſly in the duſt. Death equally ſtrikes at all; and every moment from the cradle to the grave ſhould be regarded as the poſſible moment of our own departure. Men are ſurpriſed in the midſt of buſineſs, in the midſt of pleaſure, in the midſt of the moſt firm health, in the midſt of the flattering proſpects of fortune that are opening round them—taken in the moments when they are leaſt thoughtful, and, in their own apprehenſions, the fartheſt from danger.

Life is a *fountain* fed by a thouſand ſtreams that periſhes if one be dried—It is a *ſilver cord* twiſted with a thouſand ſtrings that parts aſunder if one be broken. Frail and thoughtleſs mortals are ſurrounded by innumerable dangers which make it much more ſtrange that they eſcape ſo long than that they almoſt all periſh ſuddenly at laſt. We are encompaſſed with accidents ever ready to cruſh the mouldering tenement that we inhabit—The ſeeds of diſeaſe are planted in our conſtitution by the hand of nature—The earth and the atmoſphere,

whence we draw our life, are impregnated with death—Health is made to operate its own deſtruction—The food that nouriſhes the body contains the elements of its decay—The ſoul that animates it by a vivifying fire tends to wear it out by its action—Death lurks in ambuſh about all our paths.

Notwithſtanding this is a truth ſo palpable, and confirmed by daily examples before our eyes, how little do we lay it to heart! We ſee our friends and neighbours periſhing around us, but how ſeldom does it occur to our thoughts that our own knell, perhaps, ſhall give the next fruitleſs warning to the world.

Would you have a picture of human folly and inconſideration? Imagine a multitude of children blindfold, and engaged in thoughtleſs ſports, while death is walking in the midſt of them ſhaking a fatal dart. He pierces one, and then another and another—Deſtruction overtakes them—their agonies ſeize upon them; but they know not whence the evil comes. The ſurvivors are aſtoniſhed for a moment; but, not perceiving the cruel murderer, they play on, and

the next moment they are pierced themſelves. This is an image of men. They are blind to their approaching fate till it has overtaken them. That uncertainty which ſhould forever place it before their eyes, they make the means of baniſhing it from their thoughts. All grounds are aſſumed by them, however contradictory, to flatter themſelves with the deluſive hopes of life. The healthy expect to live, becauſe they do not perceive in themſelves the ſymptoms of decay—The infirm expect to live, becauſe their infirmity has become a habit—The young expect to live, becauſe they have not lived ſo long as others—And the old, becauſe they have lived longer. Who expects his laſt ſickneſs till it has overtaken him? Who of the ſick apprehends he ſhall die till his caſe has become deſperate? And, even in the laſt agonies, frequently, does he not look to find ſome ſhred of hope, becauſe life is ſtill poſſible?—Oh! fatal deceiver! that forever blinds the ſinner and cheats him of his ſalvation! that infatuates him with the world and makes him unmindful of his eternal ſtate! that perſuades him to truſt to life, and hides the importance, and

even the certainty of dying in the uncertainty of the time of death!

If God, in ſome clear and manifeſt way, ſhould indicate to us, as he did to Hezekiah, the term of our years, and give us aſſurance that, at ſuch an appointed time, we ſhould die, would not that fixed period continually occupy our minds?* Could we ſuffer it to eſcape a moment from our thoughts? Hurried perpetually acroſs the interval between us and that inſtant that ſhould decide our everlaſting ſtate, it would appear too ſhort for the work we ſhould have to do in it. The image of death, forever preſent, would efface the impreſſions of the world—it would render unlawful pleaſures inſipid and diſguſting—we could feel no other intereſts but thoſe that connected us with eternity.—If then death, ſeen at a diſtance, but at a certain and determined period, would ſo alarm, would ſo occupy our thoughts, would ſo detach the heart from the world, is it not extreme folly to ſuffer this ſolemn and intereſting event, now, that it may arrive every moment, to ſlip from our minds?

* Maſſillon.

Yet, ſuch is the infatuation of men!—death, that is ever at the door—death that is ready to ſurpriſe them at thoſe ſeaſons when they leaſt think of it—*death* is forgotten—and leaves the world, their paſſions, and their vices in full dominion in the heart. Like the *fool* they ſay, *my ſoul! take thine eaſe, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years:* and becauſe it is not clearly and unequivocally denounced to them, *this night thy ſoul ſhall be required of thee*, they live as if they were to live here forever.

Did this uncertainty regard merely the time, the place, or the manner of our departure hence, it would be a ſubject of comparatively little moment. To a ſincere chriſtian whoſe eternal intereſts are ſecure, it can be of ſmall importance indeed whether he makes his change now or hereafter, according to the ordinary courſe of nature, or by ſome more ſudden and unforeſeen accident. In the favour and protection of God he is always ſafe. Whenever he leaves the world, he is delivered from a painful exile and brought, with unſpeakable joy, into the preſence of his heavenly Father.—If he arrives by a ſhorter, or a rougher path

than others, ſtill he haſtens home with delight, and the glorious recompence of his fidelity makes him forget all the dangers of the way—But the dreadful uncertainty to thoſe who are *without God, and without Chriſt in the world*, is the uncertainty of their ſalvation.—Eternal happineſs, and eternal miſery are placed at the end of their courſe, and, as yet, they know not which ſhall be their portion. Onwards they are preſſing through a ſhort and doubtful pilgrimage, blindfold, and careleſs of the deſtiny that is before them. Ah! my brethren!—what is it you leave in this fearful ſtate of doubt? The immortal intereſts of your ſouls!—You ſtand between Heaven and Hell, and it is not yet decided whether, with Lazarus, you ſhall be *borne by angels into Abraham's boſom*, and the eternal manſions of the bleſſed, or, with the rich ſinner, you ſhall ſink down to unquenchable burnings whence you ſhall *lift your eyes* in vain to the throne of mercy, *being in torments*. You are haſtening to eternity—Concerns of infinite, and everlaſting conſequence hang on one brief, uncertain moment. Is this a ſituation in which you can poſſeſs your ſouls in tranquility? Can you compoſe yourſelves to peace, and com-

mit your immortal happineſs to hazard? Can any zeal, can any labours be too great to eſtabliſh it upon ſolid and immoveable foundations? and to ſhed upon your laſt moments the bleſſed light of hope?——Oh! remember that this is not like the common uncertainties of life in which we may learn leſſons of wiſdom and prudence from our errors themſelves, and time may enable us to repair the effects of paſt miſcarriages—miſcarriage here is irretrievable—the deſtinies of eternity are unchangeable.——God, who is the ſovereign arbiter of the times and allotments of men aſſigns to ſome a longer, to others a ſhorter period—but, to none does he ever permit a repetition, or a prolongation of their trial. Death is the point that fixes their ſtate for eternity.—According to the deeds done *in the body* they ſhall be judged. All their works preſs round the ſoul in that important and deciſive moment, and follow her to the great tribunal. If they have been evil, no reſource, no hope remains. On ſhe muſt go to her deſtiny. Neither prayers, nor tears, nor vows, nor the anguiſh of periſhing guilt can change, or ſuſpend the fatal decree.

When we reflect, then, on the extreme uncertainty of life and the infinite importance of dying well, what can juſtify that imprudent, that unaccountable forgetfulneſs of death in which the great maſs of mankind ſeem profoundly buried? My young friends! do you rely upon your youth, as if juſt entering on the morning of life, they had a long day before them, and ample time to indulge in pleaſure? Ah! youth is a tender flower that often decays as ſoon as it is blown. The tenderneſs and delicacy of the human frame in this period, its paſſions, its exceſſes, its indiſcretions, its inexperience render it more expoſed than any other age to fatal accidents. Do you truſt to the vigor of your health? Not to mention how often we have ſeen habitual decrepitude and infirmity wrapped in the ſame thoughtleſſneſs of their approaching change, what is health but a vapour ſcattered by the lighteſt breath? What is vigor but augmented fuel for the moſt violent diſorders? How often have we ſeen the moſt luxuriant ſtrength ſuddenly fall under the all-deſtroying ſcythe of death, as if God had mowed it down on purpoſe to ſhew how little we

ought to confide in it? If it were more durable than it is, what is the longeſt life allotted to man but a haſty viſion that flies like a dream, as rapid, and almoſt as unſubſtantial? Nay, what is the whole ſucceſſion of ages ſince the commencement of time in which generations and empires have appeared and paſſed away like phantoms gliding over the ſtage? In relation to eternity, and the great work which we have to fulfil for eternity, how ſhort!——Anticipated time ſeems long to the young and inexperienced, as if they had hours and days, and years to ſpare; but, when it comes to a cloſe, and they look back upon it, it appears, as a moment, as a point, as nothing—it is vaniſhed, and its duties, perhaps, remain unfulfilled. Life is fluctuating with perpetual uncertainty, and is haſtening to loſe itſelf in eternity. Vain mortals are borne down the ſtream of time as on the boſom of a mighty river on which they inceſſantly diſappear and ſucceed one another in the midſt of its tempeſtuous waves. At no moment are they ſecure—they ought therefore to be always prepared for an event that every moment may ſurprize them. *Watch, therefore, for ye know neither*

the day nor the hour wherein the ſon of man cometh.

This injunction of our bleſſed Lord to *watch* for his coming, may imply the faithful cultivation, and the active diſcharge of all the duties that are incumbent upon us both as men and chriſtians. Univerſal holineſs in *habit*, and, as far as poſſible, in *act* is the beſt preparation to meet our Supreme Judge. But, it is particularly deſigned to inculcate profound and habitual reflection on our mortality, and on the ſhortneſs and and uncertainty of life. No exerciſe can ſerve more powerfully to detach the heart from the world, and to ſanctify its affections. The intereſts of time which, when viewed alone, are apt to ſeduce man from his creator, loſe their dangerous importance when brought into near and cloſe compariſon with eternity—pride is humbled and mortified when we look into the duſt which is at once our origin, and our end—revenge is extinguiſhed when we look up to the bar of God where our enemies and we ſhall ſhortly be judged together—in the grave are quenched the flames of all impure and ſenſual deſires.—The proſpect of death, there-

fore, ſhould be continually before the mind. It ſhould mingle its idea along with all the views and plans of life to render them temperate and ſober—with all our occupations and engagements in the world to regulate, and give them a juſt direction—and even with all our pleaſures and amuſements to chaſten and correct them.

The children of mirth and folly, and thoſe who have hitherto lived only to pleaſe themſelves, will, perhaps, eſteem this an auſtere and gloomy morality. Theſe melancholy reflections would poiſon to them all the happineſs of life. To faſhionable diſſipations, and to thoughtleſs levity, I confeſs, they will not be very friendly. But, to enable us to live in the world as reaſonable men, and as chriſtians, nothing will contribute more than to remember our latter end—and to the true enjoyment of life, nothing will add more than the hope of immortality beyond the grave.——If death is formidable, it is guilt only that makes it ſo: and this is a new reaſon for cheriſhing the idea, and improving it to a pious uſe. It loſes its terrors when we are able to look upon it with a good conſcience. It is not

merely the pain of dying from which nature ſhrinks, nor the horror of forſaking a world which can have few charms to thoſe who have experienced its vanity, its malignity, its inſincerity—it is the apprehenſion of divine juſtice—it is the awful holineſs of God, in whoſe preſence the conſcious ſoul is about to appear, that fills it with alarm.—Purify the heart, and you will ſee with tranquility your change approach. How many holy men have met it, not with confidence only, but with triumph? What, indeed, has a good man to fear? Death robs him of nothing; for he is already mortified to the world—nay, death brings him to the poſſeſſion of all that is moſt dear to him; for his treaſure is in Heaven. It is but the gate to eternal reſt already bleſt and ſanctified by his Saviour's paſſage through it.—But, if it is an object of terror to you, will it be leſs ſo, by your not having thought of it, and prepared to meet it? Can you, by refuſing to think, delay the fatal ſtroke? No, death is advancing with a ſure but ſilent pace—he will ſtrike at the appointed time; and not to have foreſeen the blow will only aggravate its horrors.

What useful lessons, then, are taught us by the preceding reflections? One most important is *to set our affections on the things that are above, and not on things on the earth —to use this world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of the world passeth away.*

Why do we forget eternal interests only to place our hearts on those vain things that to-morrow are about to perish forever? To the cold and silent nations of the dead what are the riches, the honors, the pleasures that once occupied all their cares, and formed the objects of their incessant toils? What will they shortly be to us? Nothing on earth is durable—all things are hastening to corruption by a rapid and necessary progress. Where are those proud monuments of human greatness that once boasted a duration that would be coeval with time itself? Where is the vast succession of empires that once filled the earth with their glory and their crimes? Swept from the face of the globe, they have not left a vestige behind them of their fancied grandeur, except the few faint traces that history has gathered from the wrecks of time. If so many nations have vanish-

ed—if all their ſplendor, their tumult, their buſy cares, their noiſy mirth, their paſſions, their intrigues, their follies, and their crimes have paſſed away like a dream, and are ſunk in eternal oblivion, what is the narrow ſpan of human life? And where ſhall ſhortly be all thoſe vain and tranſient things that now occupy our thoughts, and abſorb our hearts? *The places that know us now, ſhall know us no more forever*—the objects that now engage us ſhall be left to amuſe and cheat the folly of other times. Nothing will remain to us but what we have done for God, for the ſoul, for eternity. What madneſs is it then to waſte our time, and our cares on theſe periſhing poſſeſſions, while we neglect intereſts of higher and everlaſting moment? In ſpite of all the proofs of their vanity which we have every day before our eyes in the death of our companions, our neighbors, and our friends ſhall we ſtill ſet our hearts upon them as our chief good? Nay, frequently, in the death of others, ſhall we think only of the means we derive from it of improving our own fortune? Inſtead of being mortified to the world, and being led by it to ſerious and ſober thoughtfulneſs on our own ſtate, ſhall

we ſecretly exult at it, and uſe it only to form new plans of life, new projects of ambition, new ſchemes of pleaſure? Alas! from the horrors and the aſhes of the tomb ſhall thoſe ſparks come forth that rekindle our luſts with new ardor!* On its mouldering ruins ſhall we attempt to build our own ſtability and glory!

Finally, let the uncertainty of life urge upon every hearer, and eſpecially on the young who are moſt prone to preſume upon time, a ſpeedy and earneſt concern for *the things that belong to their peace.* Intereſts of infinite moment demand your attention—the time preſſes—and will you, like Felix poſtpone them to a period that may, probably, never arrive? "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of ſalvation." God affords you the preſent inſtant to ſeek his mercy, the next is with him.—One moment of grace only is certainly yours, and do you need entreaties and remonſtrances to urge you to put it to profit? Alas! almoſt all men have loſt that pre-

* Maſſillon.

cious moment by delay. They promiſed themſelves hereafter to repent; but death cut ſhort their hopes and reſolutions in the midſt. And will you, ingenuous youth! in the ſpring of life, in the morning of an eternal being, with this fearful and inſtructive example before your eyes, be guilty of the ſame fatal error, and blaſt all the proſpects of immortality? *Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.* Haſten to the door of mercy while it is open; for, if your Lord ſhall come and find you, like the fooliſh virgins, ſleeping and unready, it ſhall be forever and inexorably cloſed. Similar warnings, I know, have been a thouſand times given you from the word of God, and perhaps a thouſand times forgotten. Shall this at laſt prove equally fruitleſs? It is in vain, O God! that mortals ſpeak. Do thou thyſelf arreſt the fugitive and giddy thoughts that eſcape from every impreſſion we would fix upon them. Penetrate! Oh! penetrate with deep and effectual conviction the ſecure and inſenſible heart! Thine is the work Almighty God! Pluck theſe precious pledges of their parent's love from

everlasting burnings. To thine infinite mercies we commit them! *Gather the lambs in thine arms*, and bring them to thy heavenly fold!

AMEN!

DISCOURSE XV.

ON THE LAST JUDGMENT.*

ACTS XVII. 31.

He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath rayed him from the dead.

THE final judgment is an event the moſt ſublime, the moſt awful, and intereſting that ſhall take place from the commencement till the conſummation of time. The everlaſting deſtinies of angels and of men ſhall be decided by the ſupreme Judge arrayed in all the ſplendors of omnipotence, and ſeated amidſt the flaming ruins of the

* *The plan of this diſcourſe was ſuggeſted at a very early period of life, by one of Mr. Durand's on the ſame ſubject. It being long, however, ſince I have read his ſermons, a great part of which I have unfortunately loſt, I am not able to make any references to particular paſſages which on my general principle, I would otherwiſe probably have done.*

univerſe. If one ray of the divine glory overwhelmed Moſes, almoſt conſumed Iſaiah, deranged, for a moment, the faculties of the diſciples on the mount of transfiguration, robbed Paul of the powers of viſion, and ſtruck him, and his companions to the earth like dead men, what will be the full diſplay of that dreadful magnificence with which the Eternal will appear to deſtroy the preſent ſyſtem, and to announce to ſinners and to ſaints the irreverſible decrees of his juſtice!——But, it is not merely the ſplendor of the tribunal, the grandeur of the ſcene that ſurrounds it, nor the glories of the judge which, on this ſubject, ought to arreſt our attention. We have a ſtill more important intereſt in the irrevocable deciſions that ſhall then be pronounced upon mankind—deciſions that ſhall take their colour from our conduct in the preſent life—deciſions founded in eternal truth and juſtice—deciſions that ſhall place our deſtiny, beyond the power of change, in hopeleſs miſery, or in everlaſting felicity.

One of the moſt inſtructive and affecting truths in the whole compaſs of revelation is, that *God hath appointed a day in which he*

will judge the world in righteouſneſs. What conſideration ought to poſſeſs more powerful influence over human conduct? What can be more calculated to inſpire men with a holy ſolicitude to approve themſelves to God who judgeth the heart? It is with a view to promote this practical improvement of a truth ſo intereſting that I have choſen to offer it to you at preſent as the ſubject of your meditations.

But I dare not attempt to repreſent the grandeur and ſublimity of that ſcene—I ſhould only impair it. I limit my view to ideas more ſimple, and, perhaps, more uſeful—to illuſtrate thoſe characters of the judgment ſuggeſted in the text—its certainty—its univerſality—its equity—and the glory of the judge—For, of this, ſaith the Holy-Spirit, he hath given *aſſurance* unto all men that—he will judge the *world*—he will judge it in *righteouſneſs*—he will judge it by *that man whom he hath ordained.* You have thus before you the whole plan that I propoſe to myſelf in the following diſcourſe.

I. In the firſt place, I ſhall endeavour to eſtabliſh the certainty of the doctrine that

God will, in the concluſion of the preſent ſtate of the world, appear to judge it, and to aſſign to the righteous and wicked their reſpective rewards in happineſs, or in miſery.

I have no need to purſue this argument in detail before an aſſembly nurſed and educated in the belief of the chriſtian religion, and the hope of immortality. I ſhall, therefore, only recall to your minds, with the greateſt brevity, the grounds on which it reſts, that its evidence may give a ſtronger impreſſion to thoſe important and practical truths that are eſſentially connected with it. For this end, I purpoſe to exhibit to you, in the firſt place, ſome of the preſumptions in favour of this doctrine which we derive from reaſon, and the general ſtate of the world, before I appeal to the irreſiſtible authority of the ſacred writings.

An argument, of no inconſiderable force, for the certainty of a future judgment ariſes from the teſtimony, if I may call it ſo, of human nature—that is, the concurrence of all nations in the belief and expectation of this great event. We find it under ſome

form or other entering into the religious ſyſtems of the moſt civilized, and the moſt barbarous people.* It is written in the whole hiſtory of man. Whence this univerſal ſuffrage to a doctrine ſo terrible in itſelf, and that contains ſo little to invite the world to embrace it? From one, or, perhaps, from all of the following cauſes it ſeems probably to have ariſen. From an original communication made by the Creator to the father of the race, from whom tradition has conveyed it to all his poſterity from the neceſſary influence of this truth —on the order, and happineſs of ſociety—or from a native and indelible impreſſion on the human heart, which connects the ſentiment of the juſtice with that of the exiſtence of the deity. Each of theſe ideas involves a new and important confirmation of the truth of the doctrine. Tradition, indeed, has often

* It was taught by the Bramins of India, by the Magi of Perſia, by the Druids of Gaul, and in the Colleges of Egypt and Chaldea. It is diſcovered even among the uncultivated natives of America. And no one can be ignorant that the popular mythology of Greece and Rome contained the elements of a truth ſo grand and intereſting, in the tribunal of Minos, in the happy fields of Elyſium the ſeats of perpetual delights to pure and innocent ſouls, and in the dreadful abyſs of Tartarus, its wheels, its vultures, its flames and the avenging furies that were ſuppoſed to perſecute the guilty.

clothed it in vague and fanciful forms—it appears in a juſt and conſiſtent light only in the ſacred ſcriptures.

In addition to the proofs drawn from the hiſtory and mythology of nations, we derive others from certain original and univerſal ſentiments of human nature. All men have a feeling of right and wrong in human conduct—vice is uſually followed by compunction and fear—guilt is accompanied with a ſecret conviction of deſerved puniſhment.—Whence theſe ideas, if we are not amenable to a law? If we are not accountable to a Supreme Judge? Such a law there is—we ſee it written on the face of nature—it is inſcribed on the whole order of providence—we feel it impreſſed on the heart of man. *They ſhew*, ſaith the apoſtle, *the work of the law written in their hearts*, the conſcience atteſting it by its clear and powerful evidence, *their thoughts*, while they are acting, *accuſing, or excuſing their own conduct.*—Conſcience, like a faithful friend, is continually reminding a good man of the inſpection and approbation of his Maker and Judge. But, to the guilty, it often appears

like a boding ſpectre pointing to the laſt tribunal. Are then theſe ſentiments vain? Do they conduct to no end? Do they point to no truth? Has God formed the nature of man with no deſign? Or, are all his feelings only the artful ſprings of a deluſive mechaniſm? No—they are founded in truth.—They lead us to the moſt ſerious of all truths—*that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs.**

The ſame principle reſults from the partial and unequal diſtribution of apparent juſtice which takes place in the courſe of providence. Although reaſon clearly indicates that God muſt be the moral as well as phiſical governor of the univerſe, yet we look in vain, in this life, for that complete diſcrimination of characters, and for that

* Every *general ſentiment* of human nature points to truth. The weakneſs of reaſon often renders us liable to error in the deductions which it draws from them; yet, at bottom they are always connected with what is true and right. In morals, the *general ſentiments of mankind* are the genuine foundations of virtue, and the chief cement of ſociety. They are forever leading man back to his duty in ſpite of the force of his paſſions, of the miſtakes of reaſon, and the errors of theory.

clear and unqueſtionable apportionment of rewards and puniſhments according to deſert which we ought to expect in the government of a righteous and holy God.—How often do we ſee vice triumphant, and virtue oppreſſed? Injuſtice and fraud grow great on the ruins of unſuſpecting confidence? Seduction flouriſh, while betrayed and plundered innocence is abandoned to deſtraction, or perpetual tears? What rivers of blood have been ſhed by the murderous hands of ambitious tyrants? And how few of them have been arreſted, like Belſhazzar, by a ſentence from Heaven, and in the midſt of their impious pleaſures, and their imaginary glory, have paid the forfeit of their crimes? On the other hand, do you not ſee them adorned with triumphs, crowned with glory, and their crimes themſelves conſecrated for virtues, and eterniz-ed in hiſtory? Where do we find in theſe events the equity of providence? That rigorous juſtice in the divine adminiſtration which reaſon, and the ſentiments of nature force us to aſcribe to God? Sentiments original, native, indelible—Sentiments that we can no more tear from us than our own

exiſtence—Sentiments not inſpired by education—not formed by men—not written, like the variable laws of nations, on braſs and marble, that are corrupted by time, but engraven, by the finger of the Creator in the bottom of our being, and eternal as the ſoul. If theſe ſentiments, then, are fountains of truth—if they conduct us, without obſcurity, to certain and demonſtrable concluſions, ought we not to expect that divine juſtice will, at ſome period, *vindicate the ways of God to man?* and that, after this mixed ſtate of diſcipline which is neceſſary to try, and to form the infinite variety of human characters for a ſuperior condition of exiſtence, there will reign a clear, decided, and eternal juſtice in a future world? Thus, the dictates of reaſon refer us to a future judgment, and to a final and righteous deciſion of the everlaſting ſtates of men.

But, the chriſtian reſts not his belief of this truth on the probabilities of reaſon, however ſtrong, but on the infallible evidence of divine revelation. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom

he hath ordained, whereof he hath given *aſſurance* unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead." The evidence of this doctrine, therefore, reſts upon the ſame baſis with the evidence of chriſtianity. The infallible word refers to it in many allegories and parables—aſſerts it in expreſs declarations—its whole ſyſtem of duties, promiſes, and threatenings neceſſarily implies it.

Of many parables ſpoken by our bleſſed Lord that obviouſly point to this great and awful event, let me recal to you only that of the tares ſown in the field along with the good ſeed,* which he interprets himſelf —"He that ſoweth the good ſeed is the Son of Man—the field is the world—the good ſeed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one—the harveſt is the end of the world —and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, ſo ſhall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniqui-

* Matthew xiii. 24, &c. 37—42.

ty, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire —there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth."

Of this fearful day there are, alſo, many ſtrong and explicit declarations throughout the word of God. "The heavens, and the earth, ſaith the apoſtle Peter, are kept in ſtore, reſerved unto fire againſt the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men."* And "Chriſt is ordained to be the judge of the quick and the dead."† Even the ſigns and fore-runners of that day are diſtinctly pointed out—*the earth ſhall be ſhaken* to its foundations—*the ſtars ſhall fall from heaven —the ſun ſhall be turned into darkneſs and the moon into blood, and the powers of the heavens ſhall be ſhaken.* In the midſt of this univerſal terror and conſternation, "the Lord ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and the trump of God,"‡ and before him ſhall be gathered all nations.§ How awful then is *the certainty* of that day when *the ſecrets of*

* 2 Peter iii. 7.
† Acts x. 42.
‡ 1 Theſſ. iv. 16.
§ Matthew xxv. 32.

all hearts ſhall be revealed, and the eternal ſtates of all men ſhall be determined!

I proceed to illuſtrate the remaining characters of the judgment ſuggeſted by the apoſtle in the text—its *univerſality*—its *righteouſneſs*—and the *glory of the judge.*

II. Its univerſality embraces all men and all their actions.

"And I ſaw, ſaith John, a great white throne, and him that ſat upon it, from whoſe face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was no place for them. And I ſaw the dead, ſmall and great ſtand before God. And the ſea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them."* "All, ſaith the apoſtle of the Gentiles, muſt appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt"†—princes and conquerors of the earth who thought that all power and judgment was committed to their hands, as well as the innumerable crowd of their ſubjects or their

* Rev. xx. 11, 12, 13.
† Romans xiv. 10.

ſlaves—the infant who has juſt looked into the world, and then cloſed its eyes upon it forever, as well as thoſe who have moved in its active ſcenes, and have a train of works to follow them to the tribunal—the countleſs myriads that in all time have peopled the earth from the firſt man to the youngeſt of his ſons, all ſhall appear in one vaſt aſſembly. What an aſtoniſhing ſpectacle! What grandeur does it add to the ſolemnity of the judgment! The trump of God re-animates the ſleeping duſt of ſo many ages, and calls from their tombs the unnumbered armies of mankind. Far as the eye can extend, you diſcern the immenſe maſs agitated with hope and fear like the boundleſs ocean in a ſtorm, and moving like ſucceſſive waves to the tribunal to render their account and receive their ſentence.—There none are too ſmall to eſcape the penetrating eye of the judge—none are too great to be beyond the reach of his power. The lords of the earth mingle with their vaſſals in an undiſtinguiſhed crowd. The ſceptres with which they ruled the nations—the thrones that boaſted to be eternal—the inſignia of their vanity

—the monuments of their power—all are cruſhed, and periſh in the ruins of the univerſe—they are all equally duſt and aſhes before the *King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords.*

I add that there all the actions of men, as well as men themſelves, ſhall be brought into judgment.

In that "day God will judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt."* And every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the day of judgment."† "The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the counſels of the heart."‡ *A book of remembrance is written before him* of the whole hiſtory of human life. Nothing can eſcape from his penetrating, and omniſcient eye. Every covering that ſelf-deceit had thrown over the heart, ſhall be pierced and ſtripped off. And actions, thoughts, deſigns, that had been long loſt from recollection, ſhall be brought to light, and aſton-

* Romans ii. 16.
† Matthew vii. 36.
‡ 1 Corinthians iv. 5.

iſh the mind with its own forgotten hiſtory. The errors and tranſports of a youth paſſed away in a continual delirium—the purſuits, the plans, the ardent occupations of middle life—the rooted habits of old age—the uſe we have made of our time—the employment of our talents—the exceſſes of our paſſions—the errors of our thoughts—the unaccompliſhed wiſhes of the heart—our omiſſions of duty—our actual ſins—the ſins of others to which we have unhappily contributed, all ſhall ſurround, and attend us to the tribunal, and form, with regard to the guilty, the baſis of its fearful decree! Ah! how profoundly ſhould we now enter into our own hearts, and ſearch to the bottom, in order to purify it, the unknown abyſs of iniquity that is concealed there! With what rigor ſhould we judge ourſelves that we may not be condemned with God! —Unhappy are they, and in the ſure courſe to perdition, who ſuffer the guilty dream of life to paſs away, without frequent, and ſerious recollection—without thorough examination and knowlege of their own character.—With infinite aſtoniſhment and confuſion of ſoul will they firſt learn their own hiſtory, and their crimes at the bar of

Heaven, in the moment when they are going to be weighed in the balance of eternal juſtice.

III. This brings to view another, and ſtill more important character of the final judgment—God will judge the world in *righteouſneſs.*

This deciſive trial ſhall turn on a full and complete compariſon of the conduct of men with the divine law; and the ſentence of the Judge ſhall be that only which the law had before pronounced. "I ſaw, ſaith John, the dead ſmall and great ſtand before God: and the books were opened; and and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of thoſe things which were written in the books, according to their works."* *The books were opened*—that is, ſays an ingenious interpreter, the books of the reſpective laws under which they had lived, whether the law of nature—the law of patriarchal revelation—the law of Moſes—or the more pure and perfect law of Chriſt. Conforma-

* Revelations xx. 12. &c.

bly to this idea the apoſtle hath ſaid, as many as have ſinned without the *written* law, ſhall periſh without *that* law, by the ſentence only of the law of nature, and as many as have ſinned in the law ſhall be judged by the law."*——Beſide them ſhall be placed the *book of life* the faithful record of human actions from the beginning of time. Thus, on one ſide, you ſee the laws preſcribed for the conduct of men in *the books of the reſpective diſpenſations under which they have lived;* on the other, you ſee the hiſtory of that conduct contained in *the book of life.* There are written our privileges and opportunities, our mercies and corrections, and the improvement or abuſe which we have made of them—There are written the numbers of our years, of our days, of our moments, and the duties, the crimes, the follies and even the omiſſions with which they have been filled up, or by which they have been marked. No uncertainty can exiſt, as at human tribunals, concerning the facts, more than concerning the law. They have all been inſcribed, by the impartial hand of God himſelf, in the eter-

* Romans ii. 12.

nal books; in which are ſeen the cauſes from which they ſprung—the circumſtances with which they were accompanied—their relations to others—and their conſequences to ourſelves, and to mankind to the remoteſt time.

That no form of trial may be omitted—that nothing may be wanting to the perfect equity of the deciſion, our conduct ſhall be atteſted by the moſt faithful and incorruptible witneſſes. Chriſtians! your prayers, your tears, your ſelf-denials, your active zeal, your ſucceſsful labours in the cauſe of your Redeemer, or for the happineſs of mankind, ſhall bear witneſs for you at the bar of God. Our Saviour himſelf points to the works of charity and benevolence performed by his people as the beſt and pureſt evidences in that day of their ſincerity and faithfulneſs—"For I was hungry, ſaith he, and ye gave me meat—I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink—I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in—naked and ye clothed me—ſick and ye viſited me—in priſon and ye came unto me."* Have you, then, been

* Mat. xxv. 35, 36.

eyes to the blind, or feet to the lame? Have you fed the hungry, or clothed the naked? Have you relieved the afflicted, and comforted the diſtreſſed? Have you inſtructed the ignorant, and brought the erring back to the way of truth and life? Have you contributed by your diſintereſted liberality, or your painful labours—by your active influence or your pious example, to diffuſe among mankind the precious knowledge of divine truth, or to ſend to diſtant regions the glorious light of the goſpel? Theſe bleſſed monuments of your charity and zeal ſhall appear for you *in the day of the Lord.*

Parents! have you trained your children in the path of virtue, and the fear of God? Have you ſolicitouſly ſtudied to promote their higheſt, their immortal intereſts? Have your counſels, your example, your perſuaſions, and your prayers early touched their hearts with the ſentiments of piety, guarded them from dangerous errors, and conducted them in the way of everlaſting peace? Precious witneſſes! Theſe dear and cheriſhed pledges of your love ſhall riſe up, and, in the face of the univerſe, ſhall call you bleſſed.

A cloud of witneſſes ſhall accompany ſinners alſo to their condemnation. All whom the unjuſt have injured—all whom the artful have beguiled—all whom the licentious have corrupted—all whom the voluptuous have ſeduced—all whom the profligate have, by their example, betrayed into vice—all whom the impious, by pernicious principles, have alienated from virtue—all who, by any influence, or even by any omiſſion of others, have been involved in diſtreſs, or drawn into vice, ſhall riſe up in the judgment to condemn them.

Above all, conſcience is a witneſs that will raiſe a faithful and deciſive teſtimony at that tribunal. All our actions, and all our principles of action, all our ſins, and every defect of duty—our actual crimes, and the purpoſes of the heart that have never been brought into act—the evils which we concealed from the world, and thoſe which we ſtudied to conceal from ourſelves, all ſhall be brought to light by it, and denounced to us with a voice louder than the thunders that rend the univerſe.—In this life, men ſtifle its dictates and remonſtrances in a thouſand ways. Buſineſs or pleaſure pre-

vent its being heard—inclination and the habits of vice bias its deciſions; and ſinners, in the midſt of their crimes, often live in a great degree of ſecurity and peace. But there, no more cauſes of ſelf-deception can exiſt—nothing can ariſe to bias its judgment, or to ſtifle its voice. It ſpeaks with fearful energy.—It anticipates the ſentence, and vindicates the righteouſneſs of the Supreme Judge. The ſinner has not, in periſhing, the miſerable conſolation of ſaying that his fate is hard or unjuſt. His frightful remorſe confirms the decree by which he is conſigned to *everlaſting burnings. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs.*

IV. He will judge it, finally, *by that man whom he hath ordained.* Although he is man he comes inveſted with the glories of the Deity, and armed with the powers of omnipotence. Once he ſojourned upon earth for our ſalvation; but his divinity was veiled under the frailties of human nature—he now appears upon the throne of the univerſe as the judge of *the quick and dead,* and the ſplendors of the godhead ſeem to have abſorbed in themſelves all that is human.

—What language can deſcribe, or what thought can comprehend that power that, with a word diſſolves the worlds which, with a word, he had created? Who can conceive of that celeſtial effulgence that will make the radiance of the ſun look like darkneſs—that would conſume mortals if they were admitted to behold it—and that will require the regenerated powers of immortality to enable them to ſuſtain the view. Ah! what a difference between the manger and the ſtalls where oxen fed, and the glorious throng of heavenly *powers and dominions* that now encircle, and wait upon their Lord! What an infinite diſparity between the croſs on which he expired for the redemption, and the throne on which he ſits for the judgment of mankind! But, on this ſubject, language is impotent, and the mind fatigues itſelf in vain to graſp thoſe boundleſs ideas.

His glory and majeſty are heightened by the dreadful effects of his power, and the infinite deciſions of his juſtice.—Of each let us take a ſhort review.

John beheld him in viſion, and "the ſun became black as ſackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood—and before his face the heaven departed as a ſcroll when it is rolled together."* "In that day, ſaith the apoſtle Peter, the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat—the earth alſo, and the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up."† From the foot of his throne iſſue the thunders that rend the world to pieces, and the lightnings that ſet it on fire. In his hands he carries the fates of men and angels. In one, he holds the treaſures of divine mercy—in the other he bears the ſtores of the *wrath of God*.——Seated in glory inexpreſſible, he calls mankind to judgment—he hears their pleas—he examines their life—he produces before them the teſtimony of their works.

At length, it remains for him only to pronounce the deciſive ſentence. The trumpet, the thunders, the lightnings, the earthquakes, and the flames have done their

* Rev. vi. 12—14.
† 2 Peter iii. 10.

office, and the deſolated univerſe is held in profound ſilence. Already the fatal ſeparation of the wicked is made from the righteous. According to his own repreſentation in his bleſſed goſpel, the righteous are collected on his right hand, like innocent *ſheep* under the protection of a tender and affectionate ſhepherd—the wicked, like purſued and trembling *goats*, ranged on his left, expect his dreadful decree. Directing himſelf to the right with infinite complacency, he addreſſes thoſe pure and virtuous ſouls who have been redeemed out of all nations, "come ye bleſſed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"—and, inſtantly, you behold *new heavens, and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs*, ſpringing from the ruins of the old, dreſſed in celeſtial beauty, and prepared to be the immortal habitations of the bleſſed.—Then turning to the left—this is not a picture of fancy—it is not the ſtructure of a heated imagination that often builds its fables on unreal grounds, it is *the word of God*—turning to the left, he pronounces on the guilty the fearful decree of eternal juſtice—"depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire pre-

pared for the devil and his angels"—Inſtantly all the thunders of heaven break upon them; and down they are impetuouſly, and irreſiſtibly driven into the unfathomable abyſs of fire and ſulphur, whence *the ſmoke of their torment aſcendeth for ever and ever.* The tremendous covering of Hell cloſes upon them, and the everlaſting bolts of its fatal doors are ſhot by the hand of the Almighty.—Oh! my ſoul! come not thou into their ſecrets, nor be partaker of their end!

My brethren, this ſublime, and awful termination of the world has not been revealed by God as a ſubject merely of curious ſcience. I have not choſen it to amuſe the ſeaſon of public worſhip, or to gratify that love of grand and marvellous ſcenes ſo natural to man. It is a ſubject in which we have the deepeſt intereſt, and which claims to have the moſt powerful influence on human conduct. It is, indeed, one of thoſe truths moſt important to morals. Morals can have no exiſtence among mankind independent on the idea of immortality, and, connected with this, of the final and righteous judgment of God. *Seeing all*

theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought we to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs?

Before that omniſcient Judge, in whoſe preſence the heavens are not clean, no impurity can paſs uncondemned, no hypocriſy uncovered, no ſelf-deceit undetected. Our whole hiſtory ſhall be developed. And *every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the day of judgment.* What an air of ſolemnity does this conſideration throw over the whole of life! Over its moſt vacant as well as its moſt buſy moments! Over its lawful amuſements, as well as its ſerious offices! They all have a relation to that day of trial, and to our everlaſting ſtate. This life, otherwiſe ſo vain and fleeting, acquires hence a reality and ſubſtance. The judgment ſtamps every moment of it with ſome character of immortality.—Whatever, therefore, you undertake or do, in the lighteſt paſtimes, as well as the moſt important duties of life, raiſe your thoughts to that deciſive tribunal, and demand of your own heart, what account ſhall I render of *this* to God my judge? A wiſe and good man will do nothing which he will fear to have re-

vealed at his bar—he will engage in nothing in which he will not be willing to be found at his appearance.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who ſhall ſtand when he appeareth? He who hath clean hands and a pure heart. Purity and virtue only, ſuſtained by the promiſe and the grace of the Redeemer, can appear ſerene and undiſmayed amidſt the univerſal conſternation. Virtue is a mail of adamant that cannot be hurt in the convulſion of worlds. The good man, with humble and devout triumph, from the midſt of the chaos, lifts his eyes to the tribunal, and in his Judge, beholds his Saviour.—But guilt will aggravate its horrors a thouſand fold. *Then ſhall they cry to the mountains and the rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who ſhall be able to ſtand? Wherefore, beloved, ſeeing ye look for ſuch things, be diligent that ye be found of him in peace, without ſpot and blameleſs.*

Finally, God hath left this day in an intereſting, and awful uncertainty that we

may not preſume upon time, but hold ourſelves always ready for its approach. *Stand, therefore, with your loins girded and your lamps burning; for you know not what hour your Lord will come. At midnight,* in your moſt ſecure and unſuſpecting moments, *the cry* may be *made.* We have no aſſurance that he is not even now preparing his throne.—And if, at this moment, he ſhould deſcend—if the heavens above our heads were cleaving to make way for the Judge—if the flames were now ſeizing on the univerſe—and the trumpet of the Arch-Angel were calling the living and the dead to judgment, how are we prepared for the great event? Where ſhould we ſtand? What would be *your* deſtiny my brethren? O *my ſoul!* what would be thine?—Although the period of the world is not arrived, Death, who is the meſſenger to arreſt us for judgment, is always near, and ready to ſeize upon his priſoners. And in whatever ſtate he lays upon us his frozen hand, he ſeals us up to the day of retribution. My beloved brethren, let us, therefore, be ever prepared for the moment of our departure, as for the awful and deciſive moment of our judgment. And grant, O righteous and merciful Judge

of the world! through the merits of thy own moſt precious death and reſurrection, that, in that day, we may ſtand at thy right hand, and riſe with thee to everlaſting life!

AMEN!

DISCOURSE XVI.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF GOOD MEN IN A FUTURE STATE.

REVELATION XIV. 13.

That they may reſt from their labors, and their works do follow them.

THIS is the benediction pronounced by the Spirit of God on thoſe who *die in the Lord.* It was probably delivered to that beloved diſciple, and evangelical prophet, who is generally held to be the writer of the revelations, during the rage of ſome of thoſe deſtructive perſecutions that waſted the primitive church. The faithful diſciples of Chriſt, were then often called to ſeal with their blood, their attachment to their Lord, and to the precious truths which they had received from him. Their way through life was encompaſſed with

enemies, they were engaged in frequent and arduous conflicts, expoſed to perpetual dangers, and were daily obliged to meet death ſurrounded with thoſe circumſtances that render it moſt formidable to the weakneſs of human nature. To conſole and ſupport them under ſo many ſufferings and trials, this gracious benediction was pronounced. But it is not confined in its application to the martyrs who glorified their Saviour by an illuſtrious, but painful death. As every part of the word of God is of general uſe, ſo this is applicable to every believer who *dies in the Lord*—who ſincerely profeſſes his name, in the midſt of a ſinful world—who is educated in his ſchool, and imbibes his ſpirit—and who is united to him, as a member to the head, by a vital faith. In virtue of this intimate and indiſſoluble relation they triumph with him over the miſeries of life, over the power of ſin the ſource of all our other evils, over the terrors of death, and over the dominion of the grave.

The world is filled with many cauſes of affliction and diſtreſs to every good man, that muſt render the grave to him at length a deſirable retreat. And the promiſe of

eternal life, after his labors and ſufferings are terminated here, offers to his hopes a ſtate of peace and felicity, after which he muſt often ſecretly ſigh—*He ſhall reſt from his labors,* and *his works ſhall follow him.* Of theſe expreſſions, both of which are figurative, the firſt implies a profound and eternal repoſe, not only from all the *fatigues* of duty, but from all the agitations, the conflicts, the griefs, the miſeries, that afflict this mortal ſtate. The ſecond points to the felicity of a *true believer,* when he ſhall finally receive the reward of his virtue, and eſpecially of his pious and faithful labors in the ſervice of his Redeemer.

It is with a view to illuſtrate, as far as without preſumption I may attempt it, the future happineſs of good men men, I have choſen the text, which I make the ground of the following diſcourſe.

They reſt from their labors, and their works do follow them.

Theſe figures point out to them a double ſource of happineſs—Reſt, and Enjoyment.

They *reſt from their labors*, from their toils, from their ſins, from their temptations, from their ſervices, from their ſufferings in the world—*their works follow them* as the foundation of their eternal felicity in the kingdom of Heaven.

I. In the firſt place, the happineſs of the pious in the future ſtate may be conſidered as a delightful reſt from the neceſſary evils and ſufferings of the preſent life.

The pilgrimage through which man is deſtined to paſs, is beſet with dangers, and expoſed to almoſt continual cauſes of affliction and pain. However we may attempt to exagerate the enjoyments of the world, or paint them in the deluſive colouring which the imagination is prone to give to the pleaſures of ſenſe; certain it is that the moſt virtuous, and the moſt happy of men, are agitated with innumerable ſolicitudes, and have innumerable miſeries to deplore, before they ſubmit to death the laſt of human miſeries upon earth. Youth, which is ever ſanguine and full of hopes, may not feel—proſperity, which is too often blind and delirious, may deny the reallity

of this repreſentation; but time will verify it to all men.—Has not time verified it already? Who is there who can ſay that he *is* happy? He only hopes *to be* ſo. It is hope, not poſſeſſion, that forms the principal happineſs of life. Were we cut off from the reſource, and, may I not call it, the fallacious ſolace of hope, the world would have little left by which to attach us to it. When we conſider how much we ſuffer in the preſent ſtate, from the errors and the weakneſs of the underſtanding—from the heart, that anxious ſeat of ſo many irregular appetites, and tumultuous paſſions—from want—from the hatred or contempt of others—from the loſs, or the afflictions of our friends—from reverſes of fortune—from diſappointed expectations—from pains and diſeaſes, that prey upon the body—from ſecret griefs that undermine and conſume the health—from the murderous weapons of avowed enmity—from the arrows ſhot in the dark by envy, calumny, and perfidious friendſhip—What a wretched habitation is the earth? What a deſirable retreat is the grave? Death yields us, at laſt, a delightful reſt from ſo many evils. It

breaks from man the fetters by which he is enchained to his miſeries.

As theſe miſeries flow from ſin as their primary cauſe; ſo ſin itſelf is eſteemed by a good man, the greateſt of his evils. From its hated and lamented tyranny, he finds in death a complete and eternal reſt. He is delivered from temptations that ſo frequently harraſſed him, that put his virtue to the moſt painful proofs, and often ſhook it to the foundations—he is freed from the errors and prejudices that had covered his mind with diſtreſſing clouds, which perplexed and obſcured to him the law of his duty —he is forever purified from thoſe frailties and corruptions which, notwithſtanding his ſanctification, ſtill adhered to him in this world, wounded his peace, and daily penetrated his heart with grief at the throne of grace. In the grave he puts off this body of ſin and death, and his ſoul, admitted to its heavenly reſt, has no more pains to endure, no more conflicts with the world, and its own rebellious paſſions to maintain, no more imperfections to fill it with regret or to cover it with ſhame, no more wants to ſatisfy, no more evils to ſuffer, no more tears to ſhed.

No more ſhall he offend God, infinitely holy and good, whom he adored and loved, even in thoſe moments when the frailties of his nature led him into ſin. No more ſhall he be expoſed to the ſecret ſnares, or open aſſaults of temptation, nor to thoſe invitations and opportunities ſo dangerous to the paſſions. Freed from the irregular impulſes of the ſenſes, of the imagination, of the heart, and delivered from an impure and imperfect nature, he ſhall ſin no more.—From an elevated point of view, looking back on all the journey of life, contemplating its evils, and its dangers, which he has juſt eſcaped—its follies, its offences, and its falls which have ſo often diſſolved him in repentance before the footſtool of divine mercy, with what unſpeakable ſatisfaction will he ſee himſelf arrived at a ſtate of everlaſting repoſe from all his ſufferings, and his fears, and placed, by the power and grace of God, in a happy and eternal impotence of ſinning!

I add, that the believer in dying, forſakes this wretched world, in which he had lived, in ſubmiſſion to the will of God, as in a ſtrange land, and arrives at

his proper home; that land of peace and reſt which he had ſo long ſought to find, and to which he was continually tending in the affections and deſires of his heart.—The earth, to a good man, is a ſtate of exile from all that he moſt fervently loves, and from the ſources of his deareſt pleaſures. He is ſurrounded with all the fatigues, and anxieties, the diſtreſſes and wants which accompany that afflicted condition; and from them all he gains, at death, a delightful repoſe in the boſom of his heavenly country. The children of this world, enſlaved to their appetites, whoſe pleaſures do not riſe above its ſenſual and corrupted ſphere, cannot enter into theſe ideas. The preſent life bounds their enjoyments and their wiſhes; and this world in which they would be willing to live forever, they cannot regard as a place of exile. But thoſe righteous ſouls who thirſt after immortal perfection, and continually aſpire after nearer acceſs and conformity to God, feel themſelves to be only *pilgrims and ſtrangers upon earth*, and while they paſs through this vale of tears, they ſigh for *a better, that is an heavenly country*—for that *city that hath* eternal *foundations, whoſe*

builder and maker is God. Often they reſemble the exiled and diſconſolate *Jews by the rivers of Babylon,* when *they hung their harps upon the willows,* and ſat down *and wept when they remembered Zion.* They are in a foreign and hoſtile land. All their pleaſures and their hopes are placed in the *new Jeruſalem,* in the heavenly *Zion,* in the *city and temple of the living God.* How often, under the lively impreſſions of the divine word; or in devout retirement, wrapt in the contemplation of heavenly things, have they been ready to cry, with the holy Pſalmiſt under the preſſure of his troubles, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away and be at reſt."* Bleſſed citizens of Heaven! baniſhed, at preſent, to theſe abodes of miſery and vice, death ſhall ere long furniſh you with the wings you deſire. Then, taking your immortal flight, you ſhall enter the delightful regions of that celeſtial country which, unſeen, you love, and take poſſeſſion of your celeſtial and everlaſting home. *Bleſſed are the dead who die in the Lord;* for *they reſt from their labors,* from their ſufferings,

* Pſalms lv. 6.

from their ſins, from their griefs, from all the fatigues, the ſolicitudes, and pains of this mortal exile.

The road of virtue was ſaid by the ancients to be up-hill, and to riſe along the ſide of a mountain, every where filled with craggs and precipices of ſteep and laborious aſcent, and encompaſſed with dangers that require the greateſt vigilance and fortitude, to eſcape or overcome. This repreſentation has ſo much truth that the faithful diſcharge of the duties that lie upon us as men, as citizens, and as chriſtians, requires the moſt vigilant attentions, and frequently the moſt arduous, painful and perſevering labors. And the difficulties and oppoſitions with which we meet from our hearts, from our infirmities, and from the world, will never ſuffer us to intermit our attentions, or to ceaſe our exertions.

Some labors, and ſolicitudes there are peculiar to the miniſters of the goſpel, or, if not peculiar, which affect them in a higher degree than other men, ariſing from the hoſtilities of the world againſt religion which they are called to combat—from the crimes

of ſinners againſt which they have at once to remonſtrate and to pray—from the errors or the coldneſs of the viſible diſciples of Chriſt, over which they are obliged in ſecret to weep—from the pride and inſolence of power and wealth which are ready to trample with contempt on an humbled and mortified profeſſion—from the infirmities and ſins of their own hearts which afflict them ſo much the more as their calling is more holy, and as, miniſtering at the altar, they approach nearer to God than other men—in a word, from the arduous functions in which they are engaged. Although many conſolations accompany the duties of a pious miniſter of religion, when he conſiders that all the ſacrifices he makes, and the pains he endures are for the glory of his Redeemer, and the higheſt intereſts of mankind, yet they are often attended with fatigues that exhauſt the body, and cares that harraſs the mind, and often are they embittered by many ſecret cauſes of affliction and grief. From all theſe evils he obtains at death an everlaſting releaſe in that bleſſed region, where "God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow nor crying;

neither ſhall there be any more pain."* "And the ranſomed of the Lord ſhall come to Zion with ſongs, and everlaſting joy upon their heads; and they ſhall obtain joy and gladneſs, and ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away."† Oh how deſirable to retreat from all theſe griefs, theſe conflicts, theſe wearifome toils, theſe anxious cares, to an eternal reſt! A reſt where the ſervice of the Redeemer, which forms the glory and felicity of the pious ſoul, ſhall never be intermitted; and where it ſhall be forever free from all the imperfections that mar, and from all the ſufferings that afflict it in this mortal ſtate. As the firſt ſubject of conſideration concerning the future happineſs of good men, ſuggeſted in the text, is Reſt,

II. The ſecond is enjoyment—"their works do follow them."

This figurative language evidently points to that high and *poſitive* ſtate of felicity which the ſaints ſhall enjoy in heaven, which is the conſequence and reward of their works.

* Revelations xxi. 3.
† Iſaiah xxxv. 10.

It conveys to us alſo, in the mode of expreſſion, two other truths of the higheſt importance—the firſt, that the habits of a holy life are neceſſary to qualify men for the poſſeſſion of heaven; becauſe, without them, they neither could deſire it as their abode, nor could they enjoy the pure and ſpiritual pleaſures that conſtitute to the pious, the happineſs of the place.—The ſecond, that their rewards there ſhall be proportioned to the advances they have made in the divine life; and to the labors they have endured, the dangers they have encountered, and the ſervices they have performed for the benefit, and above all, for the ſalvation of mankind, which is the ſervice of Jeſus Chriſt, their maſter and their Lord. On this ſubject the apoſtle Paul hath taught us, "he that ſoweth ſparingly ſhall reap ſparingly, and he that ſoweth bountifully ſhall alſo reap bountifully."* There is one glory of the Sun, and another glory of the Moon, and another glory of the Stars, and one Star differeth from another in glory; ſo alſo ſhall it be in the reſurrection of the dead."† The moſt pi-

* 2. Cor. ix. 6.

† 1. Cor. xv. 41—42.

ous, faithful, and ſucceſsful ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt ſhall ſhine with the higheſt luſtre, and enjoy the moſt conſummate happineſs in his eternal kingdom. What an animating motive was this to the fortitude of the primitive martyrs! What an illuſtrious, what a divine encouragement is it to the duty of every believer in Chriſt! If he does not reap his reward in this world, he ſhall receive one proportionably more rich and glorious in the world to come; where "the wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs as the ſtars forever and ever."* Let us my brethren, remember, however, the great and fundamental doctrine, laid by the apoſtles at the foundation of our hopes, that "it is not by *works of righteouſneſs* which we have done, but by *grace* we are ſaved." Thoſe works cannot be preſented at the throne of divine juſtice, as forming any abſolute claim to the rewards of heaven; but they become, by the gracious promiſe of God, the title of a believer to a recompence that infinitely tranſcends any claim that can be grounded on the merit of human obedience. They

* Dan. xii. 3.

follow him, not as a meritorious meaſure; but as meaſuring, ſo to ſpeak, the infinite proportions of divine grace and of heavenly glory.

The gradations of rank, ſplendor and felicity in the kingdom of heaven, are but faintly and obſcurely marked to us in holy ſcripture. It is more eaſy to impart to minds like ours ſome general apprehenſions of the glory and perfection of the ſtate of heaven, than nicely to trace its degrees. A ſcale of this kind requires a knowledge of the ſubject more accurate and juſt than our limited faculties are able to receive even from the holy ſpirit of inſpiration. Such a *ſcale* was not neceſſary to the end for which this revelation was made to the divine St. John, which was to encourage the martyrs in their mortal conflicts. Their cruel ſufferings and their unſhaken firmneſs, would indeed, procure for them a *higher rank* in the order of the heavenly ſtate, than others ſhould attain, who had not been called to give the ſame heroic proofs of their fidelity to their Lord. But it is the expected *glory and felicity* of that ſtate, that ſuſtains the

courage of a chriſtian, and enables him to triumph over the moſt formidable pains of death.

This felicity and glory is the ſubject chiefly pointed at in the text, and that to which without entering into any repreſentation that muſt at beſt be fanciful, concerning the economy, and the gradations of rank that may take place in the kingdom of God, I ſhall limit my view in the remaining part of this diſcourſe.—But how ſhall we deſcribe that which *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard*, and of which it hath not *entered into the heart of man* to conceive! It would require the colours of heaven and a divine pencil to repreſent that celeſtial "city which hath no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to ſhine in it; for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are ſaved ſhall walk in the light of it, and there ſhall in no wiſe enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life."*

* Rev. xxi. 23, 24—27.

The improvements, and the ſublime perfection of human nature ſhall be correſpondent to the glory of its habitation. But both, perhaps, are equally out of the reach of our conceptions at preſent. We muſt actually have attained, before we can fully comprehend, thoſe immortal powers with which the *body* ſhall be raiſed from the grave, and re-united to the ſoul, purified and exalted by a nearer approach to God. It is raiſed ſaith the apoſtle in incorruption—in glory—in power.———It is raiſed a *ſpiritual body!**—Mark that bold and extraordinary figure. It is allied in its eſſence to the immortal ſpirit——compoſed of the moſt pure and active principles of matter that reſemble the purity and activity of the ſoul—incorruptible in its organization like the diamond——ſplendid in its appearance like the ſun—rapid and powerful in its movements like the lightning, that bears in its courſe an image of the omnipotence of the Creator.

The *ſoul*, purged from the dregs of ſin, ſhall bear a higher reſemblance of the perfection of God in whoſe image it was firſt

* 1 Corinthians xv. 42, 43, 44.

created. Its intellect ſhall be boundleſsly enlarged—its affections ſhall be directed with immortal and unceaſing ardor to the eternal ſource of love—and we have reaſon to believe that it ſhall enjoy the power of unlimited excurſion into the works, and, if I may ſpeak ſo, into the eſſence of the Deity.

On a ſubject of which it is ſo far beyond the preſent powers of the human mind adequately to conceive, it becomes us to ſpeak with modeſty and caution. In judging of it, reaſon affords no lights to guide us—the fires of the imagination will only miſlead us—we muſt take our ideas ſolely from the ſcriptures of truth. And when we collect together all that thoſe ſublime oracles of wiſdom have ſaid upon this ſubject, and take from the whole, thoſe general views which they give of the ſtate and felicity of Heaven, we may range them under the heads of its *glory*—its *immutability*—and its *eternity*.

Its glory—"It doth not, indeed, yet appear what we ſhall be, but we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is."*—There the

* 1 John iii. 2.

redeemed ſhall dwell in the preſence of God, who alone can fill the unlimited extent of their deſires—there they live in the delightful exerciſe of an eternal love, and in the full poſſeſſion of all that can render them ſupremely bleſſed—for, "in his preſence is fullneſs of joy, and at his right hand are pleaſures forever more."*

There they ceaſe not celebrating in ſongs of extacy, the infinite perfections of God, and the boundleſs riches of redeeming love. "Hallelujah! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God."† Worthy is the Lamb that was "ſlain to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honor, and glory, and bleſſing!"‡ There, according to the emblematical language of the revelations, they are ſeated on thrones, and receive from his hands celeſtial diadems—for, ſaith the ſpirit, "they ſhall *reign* with him forever and ever."§

If human nature, notwithſtanding all its preſent imperfections, is deſtined to

* Pſalms xvi. 11.
† Revelations xix. 1.
‡ Revelations v. 12.
§ Revelations xxii. 5.

ſuch improvement and felicity, much more is it reaſonable to believe that the eternal habitations of the pious, and the temple of the immediate preſence of God, are infinitely ſuperior in ſplendor and glory to all that we now behold in the ſublimeſt, or the moſt beautiful works of nature. When this veil of ſenſe ſhall be withdrawn, what an unutterable ſcene of wonders ſhall be diſcloſed! Imagination cannot picture them, language cannot deſcribe them, we have no powers, at preſent, capable of admitting or ſuſtaining the view. Could we ſuppoſe a mole that grovels in the earth, enveloped in abſolute darkneſs, and circumſcribed to a few inches, to be endued with the powers of viſion and reaſon, and ſuddenly admitted to contemplate, with the eye of Gallileo, or the mind of Newton, the ſplendors and boundleſs extent of the univerſe, its raviſhments, its tranſports, its extaſies, would afford but a faint image of the raptures of the ſoul opening her immortal view on the glories of that celeſtial world.

But the glory of the heavenly ſtate conſiſts not only in the augmented powers of

human nature, and the external magnificence that adorns it, but in the holy and devout, and, may I not add, the benevolent and ſocial pleaſures that reign there.

There "the pure in heart ſee God,"*—there they "know even as alſo they are known"†—there they love without ſin him whom it was their ſupreme delight to contemplate and to love on earth.—And if, with the divine philoſopher of Greece, I may venture to ſpeak ſo, there they mingle themſelves with God.—But this is a ſubject which I dare not touch. I fear to profane it by the imperfect colouring, or the miſguided fervors of ſenſe.—Sometimes the humble and devout believer, in the communion of his ſoul with God, or in the celebration of the precious myſteries of his grace in his temples here below has enjoyed ſuch diſcoveries of his infinite goodneſs and mercy as have been almoſt too powerful for the feeble frame of fleſh and blood—Ah! what then will be the manifeſtations of Heaven! My beloved brethren, an Almighty power, a

* Matthew v. 8.

† 1 Corinthians xiii. 12.

celeſtial regeneration will be neceſſary to enable you to ſuſtain the unutterable bliſs!

I have ventured to mention alſo the ſocial and benevolent pleaſures of that ſtate. And it will not, perhaps, be the ſmalleſt part of the felicity of pious ſouls to enter into the ſociety, to participate the joys, and to receive the congratulations of thoſe perfect ſpirits who have never fallen from their rectitude, and of the ſaints redeemed from among men, who have gone before them to take poſſeſſion of their promiſed reſt.—"There is joy in Heaven, ſaith Chriſt, over one ſinner that repenteth*"—how much greater will be their joy, when he has eſcaped the dangers of the world, when he has no more cauſe of repentance, when he has kept the faith, when all his conflicts and temptations are finiſhed, and he has arrived at the end of his courſe where nothing ſhall ever be able again to ſhake the ſecurity of his ſtate, or to impair the plenitude of his happineſs? What high enjoyment will it be to meet there his fellow travellers through the dangerous pilgrimage of life, eſcaped

* Luke xv. 7.

from its pollutions and its ſnares. To meet there with "Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob and all the prophets," with all the holy apoſtles and martyrs of Chriſt! To meet there the friends who were moſt dear to him on earth, whoſe ſouls were mingled with his! To meet there his fellow Chriſtians out of every denomination, on whom, perhaps, he had been accuſtomed to look with diſtruſt and jealouſy! Nay more, to meet there devout men like Cornelius from every nation under Heaven; and to ſee the grace of God infinitely more extended than thoſe narrow limits which probably his prejudices had preſcribed to it! What immortal conſolations muſt fill the breaſts of thoſe who "are come unto mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general aſſembly of the Church of the firſt born, who are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect.*"

The immutability of the happineſs of Heaven is another character of it, that deſerves our conſideration. The power of

* Hebrews xii. 22, 23.

God will place the redeemed beyond the influence of temptation and ſin, and the perfection of the heavenly ſtate will forever exempt them from all thoſe cauſes of frailty and change that exiſt upon earth. It knows no change except that of continual progreſſion. The principal value of all our ſources of enjoyment in this world is deſtroyed by their inſtability. Every object here is mutable, and diſappoints thoſe who expect permanent felicity from it, and *pierces through with many ſorrows* thoſe who attempt to lean upon it. Even the comforts that flow from religion in the preſent life are variable and uncertain, becauſe the ſanctification of the believer is ſtill partial and imperfect. But, in Heaven, being perfectly holy, he ſhall be completely and immutably happy.

Eternity is the idea that crowns and enriches the whole. "There ſhall be no more death," ſaith the *amen*, the faithful and true *witneſs*. The felicity of the ſaints, like the being of God, ſhall be interminable.—Glorious and conſolatory truth! I would willingly aſſiſt your minds to frame ſome meaſures of an immortal exiſtence, but how

ſhall we meaſure a ſubject that ſo far ſurpaſſes our feeble conceptions? Number the ſtars that fill the ſky—reckon the ſands upon the ſea ſhore—count the drops in the immeaſurable ocean—compute the atoms that compoſe the globe—multiply them by millions of years, and when this amazing ſucceſſion of duration ſhall have been finiſhed, and repeated as many times as are equal to its own units, eternity will be but beginning—Beginning! It cannot be ſaid to be begun. It is wrong to apply any term which meaſures progreſſion, to that which has no period.

In this aſtoniſhing and boundleſs view the mind is overwhelmed! What a glory does it ſhed over the *inheritance of the ſaints in light!* How ſtrongly is it calculated to awaken the deſires of a believer after the *reſt that remaineth for the people of God!* I may add, how well is it fitted to conſole thoſe who mourn over their friends who ſleep in Jeſus! If, at any time, the mind is ready to ſink under the weight of its ſufferings in the preſent life, and to repine at the will of God, will it not become patient, and even thankful again, when it looks forward to that immortal bleſſedneſs to which every

calamity that tends to cruſh this frail tenement of clay, is only haſtening our paſſage? "For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal."*

Bleſſed are the dead who die in the Lord! yea ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labors, and their works do follow them! What a conſolatory, what a ſublime and glorious object is here preſented to the faith and hope of good men, and confirmed by the faithful aſſeverations of the ſpirit of truth! All the ſufferings, induced by ſin in the preſent life, there come to an everlaſting period—all the joys that human nature exalted and improved with immortal powers can ſuſtain, ſhall be poſſeſſed by the redeemed, and ſhall continually increaſe in an endleſs progreſſion. There you behold them in the midſt of their heavenly country from which they ſhall be no more exiled—there they contemplate without a veil,

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

in the clear, unclouded vision of heaven, the adorable perfections of God—they behold him enthroned in glory ineffable, whence he dispenses happiness to countless myriads of blessed spirits—Rivers of pleasure issue from the foot of the eternal throne—they bathe themselves in those pure and celestial streams—they are absorbed in extacies of a divine and immortal love.

My brethren! what an animating motive to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*, is proposed to your faith in the blessed promise of life and immortality! What a reward for all the labours, and self-denials of virtue! What a consolation under all the afflictions of life!——The happiness of heaven is essentially connected with purity of heart, with sanctity of manners, and with usefulness of living. And your progress in these divine qualities shall be the measure of your eternal felicity. The path of perfect virtue, indeed, is laborious, and often passes in its course over steep and difficult ascents. Our passions frequently render extremely painful the sacrifices which duty requires. We are obliged to combat with the world, its interests, its pleasures, its examples, its solicitations, and, still more, to

maintain a conſtant conflict with ourſelves. But, contemplate the ſublime recompence which religion confers on theſe labours and theſe ſacrifices, and they are arduous no longer. What are the enticements by which vice would enſnare the heart, and withdraw it from virtue, compared with that *fulneſs of joy* that is in the *preſence of* God, and thoſe rivers of *pleaſure* that flow at his *right hand forever more!* What are the labours or dangers of duty compared with its triumphant reward! *Endure hardneſs*, therefore, *as good ſoldiers of Chriſt Jeſus*, remembering that theſe ſhort conflicts ſhall, ere long, gain for you crowns of victory, and encircle you with immortal glory.

Finally, this hope affords a good man the beſt conſolation under affliction. All the neceſſary evils of life will ſoon be ended, and will open to him a peaceful entrance *into the joy of his Lord.* If diſeaſe and pain are haſtening his *return to the duſt from which he was taken*, why ſhould he repine, ſince they are at the ſame time bringing him to thoſe *living fountains* of immortal health, where *God ſhall wipe away all tears from his eyes?* If the deareſt ties of friendſhip, or of love are broken aſunder, and his heart is torn by cruel

bereavements; religion enables him to find a ſweet repoſe in God his beſt friend, and conducts his hopes to a ſpeedy and delightful re-union, in the regions of the bleſſed, with thoſe pure and virtuous ſouls who were here moſt dear to his heart. In like manner, if poverty overwhelm him, or his faineſt poſſeſſions have been blaſted by the ſtroke of divine providence, are they not infinitely more than compenſated in that *heavenly inheritance* to which, by divine grace, he is born? —And, when death comes to diſſolve the temporary and decaying tabernacle in which he had ſojourned in this barren wilderneſs, can he be diſmayed, or yield to impious fears, when he ſees beyond its flood the *land of* promiſed *reſt*, in which there is prepared for him *a building of God an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!*

Bleſſed are the dead who die in the Lord—yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours, and their works do follow them!

AMEN!

FINIS.

A LIST OF ERRORS,

Which the Reader is requeſted to correct, owing to the remote ſituation of the Author from the Preſs.

Page 11, line 16, before *rancour* inſert *the*
Page 26, line 24, for *dreadful*, read *fearful*
Page 41, line 25, for *ambitous*, read *ambitious*
Page 46, line 14, for *caſt of*, read *caſt off*
Page 99, line 21, for *propably*, read *probably*
Page 119, line 1, for *the*, read *all*
Page 121, line 3, for *reflecting*, read *unreflecting*
Page 122, line 6, for *eſſential* read *eſſential*
Page 126, note, for *peckereſſe*, read *pechereſſe*
Page 169, line 15, ſtrike out *to*
Page 213, line 13, before *citizens* inſert *good*
Page 216, line 22, for *from*, read *by*
do. line 23, for *receive*, read *hear*
do. line 24, after *deſtiny* inſert *pronounced.*
Page 290, line 13, for *the* read *an*
Page 309, line 3, for *drew* read *draw*
Page 318, note, line 1, for *illuminatti*, read *illuminati*
Page 321, line 3, after *but*, inſert *they*
Page 331, line 4, for *friendly*, read *finally*
Page 338, line 9, for *breaſts*, read *breaſt*
Page 353, line 12, for *currupt*, read *corrupt*
Page 370, line 8, for *they*, read *you*
do. line 9, for *them*, read *you*
Page 384, line 12, after *poſterity* inſert —
do. line 14, ſtrike out — before *on*
Page 387, line 10, for *deſtraction*, read *diſtraction*
Page 405, line 7, for *uncovered*, read *undiſcovered*
Page 411, line 18, ſtrike out *men*
Page 430, line 21, for *even* read *ever*

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